

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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***“Let no debt remain outstanding,
except the continuing debt to love one another”
(Romans 13:8)***

The debt of love is categorical and admits of no exceptions. In Buddhism love is a rather dispassionate feeling of benevolence toward humanity in general, though much less is said of its expression toward particular individuals. Not so in Christianity. “Agape” is not an abstract concept; it is a will in search of an object.

Four times Paul identifies that object as “one another” (v8), “fellowman” (v8), and “neighbor” (twice in vv 9,10). The other person represents God’s claim on our love. We normally think of our neighbor as a person who is like us, but in the parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Final Judgment (Matt 25:31-46) the neighbor is very much unlike us. Others are our neighbors not because they are like us, not even because they are chosen by us, but because they are given to us by God with a need which we can meet. Indeed, Christ himself meets us in that need (Matt 25:40, 45).

James R. Edwards, New International Bible Commentary

Editorial

“The Day the Towers Fell”

“In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill” (Isa 30:25 NIV).

Future Applications

In the exhortation in this issue, we are advised to put our trust in the LORD, despite the perils that befall us, and the events of 9/11 are used as an example of these dangers. As I read it, my thoughts went back to that day — and also the use made at that time of the passage from Isaiah above. Many, including some in our community, were convinced that the events of that day were prophesied in this passage, and were a sign of the nearness of the coming of Christ. Indeed, as we consider the context in Isaiah, we read: *“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:”* (Isa 30:8). And then Isaiah continues with words about the sun and moon that find their echo later: *“Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended”* (Isa 60:20). So the context of the passage *“when the towers fall”* has been combined with the well-known prophecies in Zechariah. For example, John Thomas wrote:

“ ‘There was a great earthquake,’ says John, ‘and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.’ Whether the falling of the cities is a political or literal overthrow, we stay not to examine. We believe it is both — politically, because Daniel saw the thrones cast down (Dan. 7:9); and literally, because an earthquake that will shake Rome into the abyss, and cleave the Mount of Olives to its foundations (Zech. 14:4, 5), prostrate the towers (Isaiah 30:25), and cause every wall to fall to the ground (Ezek. 38:20), must of necessity cause vast destruction among ‘the cities of the nations.’ ”¹

In addition, if you look at its use in the writings of our community, not only has this passage in Isaiah been associated with end time events, it has been used as an example of the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, not neglecting its future application. Among the several examples, I cite one written by CA Ladson, the son-in-law of Robert Roberts and the assistant editor of *The Christadelphian* at the time:

“Readers of the Prophets of Israel who spoke on behalf of the God of Israel who declared His purpose to ‘stain the pride of all glory,’ cannot but tremble for the future of this undertaking launched under such happy circumstances, humanly speaking. The choice of site upon the Mount of Olives has been hailed as happy and of good omen by thousands, but who can forget who reads the Prophets that that mount is to ‘cleave in two’ at a

certain not distant day? Isaiah, looking on to the day of Israel's salvation, saw first a day of destruction at Jerusalem 'when the towers fall' (30:25). This was true in the day of Titus, and will be true again before the Lord is king over all the earth and Israel's eyes are enlightened.”²

So we have two interpretations of this prophecy, which was written presumably around 710 BC, after the fall of Samaria and amidst the terrible threat and destruction afflicted by Sennacherib and his Assyrian Army. We all must know of the siege of Jerusalem, led by the Rabshekah, which is most probably a term for field commander. So was the prophecy intended to talk about the fall of Jerusalem nearly eight centuries later, or the destruction associated with the return of their savior in the last days? Or was there a more immediate application, associated with the period in which Isaiah was writing?

Contemporary Applications

A contemporary application is in fact common throughout Isaiah. As I am writing this, the strains of Handel's Messiah are playing softly in the background, and I expect to hear the words “A virgin shall conceive” (Isa 7:14) before long, applied so beautifully by Matthew to the virgin birth of our Lord. That this most probably in Isaiah refers more immediately to the birth of Hezekiah is an understanding I have³, although the use of the term for “virgin” in the Greek translation of this OT passage reinforces the use of it by Matthew. (The Hebrew uses a more ambiguous word, which primarily means an unmarried woman.) So we have, in perhaps the most well-known direct prophecy of Isaiah, an immediate application as well as an undoubted future meaning.

So what might be the contemporary meaning in this verse (Isa 30:25)? What towers fell? It was certainly not those of Jerusalem, as was the case in AD 70 and is likely to be the case in the future. No, I believe it is referring to the siege towers of the Assyrian army, which undoubtedly fell during the night of the angel of the Lord.

“Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (2Kgs 19:32-35).



We know from contemporary illustrations and descriptions that the Assyrians used siege towers quite commonly at the time, as can be seen alongside⁴. This type of warfare was common against such well-fortified cities as Jerusalem for

we read “*Into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to open the mouth with a cry, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers*” (Ezek 21:22, RSV).

As an engineer, I have always been interested in the occasional references to technology in the Bible, and this is one I identified some years ago, as referring to the siege of Jerusalem. So it was with more than passing interest I heard the passage in Isaiah 30 cited when the Twin Towers fell in New York in 2001. This event, 9/11, has become seared into the memories of the inhabitants of the USA: I wonder myself whether the event will be remembered, as the siege of Jerusalem in 70BC has been remembered — or the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Comments

So we have three applications of this verse, Isa 30:25, over time: contemporary, associated with the time of Christ, and still future. This is a common pattern with Old Testament prophecies: we think of the words of Jesus “*But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:*” (Mark 13:14). This passage had an application in the time of the Maccabees, when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple in around 167 BC: and in AD 70, when The Romans did the same. It can also be argued that they were also fulfilled when the Patriarch of Jerusalem uttered these words in AD 638, as the Calif Omar went up to the temple mount. And we can also expect a fulfillment when Christ returns, although the form it will take is not clear. Indeed some thought we saw some sort of fulfillment when the Pope visited Jerusalem in AD 2000.

Of this we can be sure: to say any Old Testament prophecy refers only to its fulfillment at the time, or its fulfillment by Christ, or refers solely to the end times, is a very risky statement. Many prophecies were fulfilled in quite an unexpected way when Christ came two millennia ago. As we see the turbulent times around us, we can also expect events to fulfill Bible prophecies in quite unexpected ways. And it also helps us to be aware of the events of the times of the prophets, for most of their prophecies had immediate relevance.

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. *The Herald of the Kingdom*, 1852 p123.
2. CA Ladson in *The Christadelphian*, 1925 p 225.
3. I know the chronology is difficult, as most would say Hezekiah was 9 years old at this time. But I consider the whole context points so directly to Hezekiah as to leave this among the many problems of OT chronology.
4. From Layard's drawings of the engravings found in the palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud: to be found in Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*.

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

Exhortation

Reflections on September 11

September 11 is a date that will always be remembered in this country, and many other countries. And we know why. It is one of those dates that will always be etched in our memories; we will all remember where we were and what we were doing on September 11, 2001, over ten years ago now.

“9/11” as it is known, was and is a day to remember. It is a day when the nation takes time to pause and reflect. Most people will say that things will never be the same again after that date. The nation lost its sense of security, its sense of invulnerability, its feeling of being all-powerful and it's thinking that bad things like this always happened somewhere else, outside these shores. People reflect upon these things, particularly on that day. They do not think of them all the time or just that day, but that day is special, it is different.

Think back to that day. When the first plane hit the tower I was in a meeting and someone knocked on the door to say a plane had hit a building in New York. We paid little attention. We thought a small plane or helicopter had hit a building. Then the second plane hit and everything erupted. We were glued to the TV screens and our computers. Then it dawned on someone; the son of our company chairman worked on the 105th floor of one of those buildings. We knew him. He had worked with us in the summers. Then the tragedy started to hit home. Then there came the videos of people falling to their deaths, of huge clouds of debris swirling madly after crowds of fleeing people. Then the first tower collapsed, this huge edifice, seemingly so impregnable. Then the second tower. It all seemed so impossible. Two huge towers that had commanded the skyline for 20 years, and suddenly they were gone. Also gone were almost 3,000 people.

So many lives would be forever affected by this tragedy, and the ones in Washington and Pennsylvania. Families torn apart, parents, children, relatives of all kinds. Life would never be the same for so many.

We have, perhaps, come to terms with the new realities of life. Any of us who travel will know just how much longer it takes to board a plane and anyone travelling from the U.S. to Canada will know how what was once a 30 second encounter can now last up to an hour.

All in the name of security. People need to feel secure. They feel unprotected and vulnerable, and fearful when they think about it. So many choose not to think about it, except on this date.

With this as a background, then, we need to ask ourselves if this is how it has affected us, as Christadelphians. Are ~~we~~ more fearful, more insecure, feeling more vulnerable?

Refuge

We read “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (Psa 46:1). What exactly does that verse mean to us? God is our **refuge**. That word refuge means “a shelter (literally or figuratively) — hope, (place of) refuge, shelter, trust”.

God is our refuge, our shelter, our hope and our trust. It sounds good; actually a lot more than good, but what does it mean to us as we live our daily lives? I suspect we were just so glad it hadn't happened to us! I wonder whether we thought to offer prayers for the safety of our brothers and sisters in the affected areas. Just suppose it happens here, and then what will our thoughts be? Are our minds so familiar with the Word that we immediately go to: “*Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea*” (Psa 46:2).

I am not a Hebrew scholar but I think you will find this interesting. The word for refuge in verse one is “machaceh” with the meaning we have looked at. However the word for refuge in verses seven and eleven is a different word, “misgab” meaning a cliff (or other lofty or inaccessible place); abstractly, altitude; figuratively, a refuge — defense, high fort (tower), refuge.

So now we can read verse 7 like this: “*The God of Jacob is our high tower*” and verse 11 the same way. So our God is not only a place to take shelter, a place to take refuge, but He is also our high tower, standing above the tumult. Perhaps, when we think of those high towers in the World trade center we should think of the *really* high tower, our God, who, the Psalmist says, is with us.

I guess that is the problem we all have from time to time. We ask ourselves, “is God *really* with us” or “if He is, why is this happening to me”?

Perhaps later in the Psalms we will see the question we *should* be asking. Or, rather, the statement we should be making. “*I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust*” (Psa 91:2 NKJV).

Here are three dictionary definitions for trust:

- 1) reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.
- 2) confident expectation of something; hope.
- 3) a person on whom or thing on which one relies: God is my trust.

Trust, there is very little of it in the world we live in, but we are not of the world, we have a different frame of reference. “*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding*” (Prov 3:5).

There are over 30 references in the Psalms alone to trusting in God.

So this idea of trusting God is not just some hypothetical idea or comfortable thought. It is something that has to be a reality in our lives. We *really, really* have to trust God and know that He will care for us. “*For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;*” (Psa 91:3 RSV).

Our God will deliver us. Our God *has* delivered us. He has delivered us from the snare of death, the “deadly pestilence”. Because of what we remember here this morning, the death and resurrection of our Lord, we have escaped the snare of permanent death. We have escaped it! Why would we want to go back to the trap again, to be ensnared in this life, to “enjoy” what this life has to offer? When we saw people rushing from those crumbling towers only the firefighters were rushing into them. They had escaped and whatever it took, they had escaped and were thankful for it. Eventually the full impact of what they had experienced would sink in. All of their colleagues who would not escape, all of their personal items they could not retrieve, and sometimes the whole thing would seem overwhelming. **Two thousand children lost a parent on that day.** Sometimes, perhaps, we allow ourselves to think of the Truth as something where *we have lost so much*.

- We have lost friendships with those who think we are strange for our beliefs.
- We have lost family connections for the same reason.
- We may have lost the friendship of brothers and sisters because of our stand for truth.

We sometimes get depressed. We have lost so much! Ironical isn't it, we think we have lost so much but we have been given our life! We have escaped from the trap of the fowler, the certain trap of death. We may have lost the benefits of this life in some ways but what is that compared with the Kingdom? When people were staggering home from the WTC none of them were thinking, “I wish I was wearing my best suit”. They were overjoyed to have escaped and that is what we should be, overjoyed to have escaped a certain death.

“Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your habitation,” (Ps 91:9 RSV).

So the question remains, **have** we made the Lord our refuge, our habitation? Or, with different emphasis, have **we** made the Lord our refuge, our habitation? Or, again, have we made **the Lord**, our refuge, our habitation?

Habitation

*“Be thou my **strong habitation**, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; **for thou art my rock and my fortress**” (Psa 91:9 RSV). It is the same word as used in “Lord, thou hast been our **dwelling place** in all generations” (Psa 90:1).*

So we ask ourselves, is this what our God is to us, a place where we live, the center of our lives, our strong habitation? It is worth noting that this same Psalm contains these words; “*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*” (Psa 90:12).

In what way can our God be our dwelling place, the center of our lives? How do we apply our hearts unto wisdom?

It starts with a basic, fundamental, truth that if we want God to be the center of our lives *we must put Him there*. In our personal lives and our ecclesial lives, He has given us His word, to tell us everything we need to know about Him and His

purpose with us. Yet sometimes it seems that we look on this as a burden to be endured, rather than a joy to be shared. So the first, most basic way in which we can put God in the center of our lives is by reading what he has written for our instruction, and let us not forget, for our *comfort*.

Paul writes:

*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the **God of all comfort**; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that **we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God**” (2Cor 1:3-4).*

Our God is a God who comforts us when we are down, when we are troubled, when we are depressed or discouraged and, in turn, He expects, requires, that we will do the same for others.

We are not to fear things, because:

“I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust... Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday” (Psa 91:2-6).

When, earlier, we read from Proverbs 3 of trust, we should also have read *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Prov 3:6). This is how we show our trust for our God. We *acknowledge* Him, or as the word really implies, we *know* Him.

It is a word used often in Ezekiel with the idea of knowing that what God says He will do He will definitely do. In Ezekiel’s case what He was going to do to Jerusalem.

*“And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and **ye shall know that I am the LORD**” (Ezek 7:4).*

They were being told; we are being told. Know that what I say I will do, I will do. In the case of the Proverbs reading we are being told, “know God, acknowledge Him in the way you live your lives and He will direct your paths”. God has offered to be our refuge and strength but we have to make Him that and we have to start somewhere.

So what is our priority? Is our priority putting our trust in God, in making Him our refuge, the place where we choose to live? Or are our priorities somewhere else? The economic downturns of the past few years should have made us realize that to trust in this world for security is pointless. When we have re-prioritized our savings plans and our retirement plans have we given any thought to re-prioritizing our spiritual lives?

What about us? We have probably all experienced tragedies in our lives, or acute loss, or physical pain. When the tragedy was at its worst, or the loss so hard to bear or the pain so acute I suspect that we were constantly seeking our God in prayer, begging Him for help, seeking consolation in His word. But when time passed,

and the urgency of the tragedy, the loss, the pain faded, and then the urgency and consistency of our prayers faded too.

God is always there for us. Always. But are we always there for Him? *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”*. **Always.**

“Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof....the earth melted” (Ps 46:3).

On 9/11 the towers shook, and melted and death and destruction followed. But we are still here, because, *“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Ps 46:11).*

That is indeed a day to remember. But not just for the reason the world remembers. This is our day of remembrance every week, not just once a year. On it we remember what it is that has brought us together, the price paid for rescuing us from the trap of death. Remember, our God cares for us. He wants us to be in His Kingdom. That is what we have, brethren and sisters, God’s care and protection through his angels. It is **real**, although we have a hard time comprehending it at times.

So what shall we remember today for? We should remember it for the time in which we have shared fellowship together, for the time when we shared these emblems together and above all for the death and resurrection of our Lord who has made all of this possible for us

We cannot help but remember that tragedy of the day, September 11, over ten years ago now, but perhaps we can also reflect, as we examine ourselves, what have those years meant to me? Am I closer to the Word than I was then? Am I trusting in God that He will be my refuge from the storms of life? Am I more prepared for His coming? After all, we have been given time to prepare ourselves: what have we done with that time?

The people trapped in those towers would have given anything to have been able to escape from that inferno. Anything to be able to start over again. Would have promised anything to have been allowed to begin that day again. This is what we have been given. An escape from the trap of death, an opportunity to start over, beginning today, a time to renew the promises we once made at the time of our baptism, to serve our Lord to the best of our ability.

God is our safe haven. He **will** keep us safe and secure. He is our refuge and our strength.

“...for he has said, ‘I will never fail you nor forsake you.’ Hence we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?’” (Heb 13:5-6 RSV).

Now we will remember our Lord, and renew our vows and start over.

Bill Perry (Detroit Milford, MI)

“Racism is man’s gravest threat to man — the maximum hatred for a minimum reason” (Abraham Heschel).

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel:

(3) The Kingdom of God and the Universe

Our premise is that we can glimpse a measure of the future divine glory to be revealed by recognizing the flawless symmetry between the written word of our Creator (the Bible) with the spoken word of our Creator (Creation/nature). Again, the word 'nature' is only used reluctantly as an indulgence to the common perspective, without any intended offense against our Creator.

There is little doubt we have all seen similarities between some of the features of creation and how the gospel truths and divine principles are expressed. The resurrection is defined as an awakening, paralleling our natural awakening from a death like sleep to the dawning of a new day. Also, mankind is the exclusive animal species that produces clothes to cover the shame of our created form, mirroring the lesson of atonement exclusively directed to those who had been originally made in the image and likeness of the Creator. The annual agricultural process is a creational parable projecting the path to divine acceptance, defined as fruitfulness. It begins with the plowing of the dust of the earth into which the seed of promise is sown, paralleling how the seed of the word of promise can only be sown successfully in those suffering under the curse of the dust (dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return) whose hearts have been circumcised.

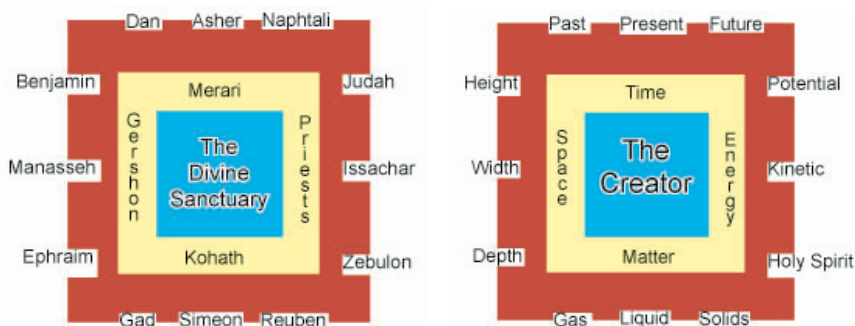
The chicken or the egg ... the flesh or the spirit

In order to reap the benefits of this field of meditative examination, the first issue we have is that our Creator did not simply examine His creative order, and then draw parallels to His principles and truths in His written word. Divine principles are as ancient as our Creator, who is from everlasting. The principles of the Creator were actually the design guidelines, the template for Creation. Our Creator is not subject to the universe. The universe is subject to Him and is a direct result of His creative and sustaining attention. The reason why the features of creation so perfectly project divine truths and principles is that these truths and principles served as the design template for the features of creation. The chicken or egg origin question is a mere diversion, a cheap magician's trick of isolating our attention away from the reality that both the chicken and the egg both came first together. However this was not the case with creation and divine principles. The divine principles have been from forever. The creative order is a result of these eternal principles. This perspective defines the divine truths and principles as the projector and creation as the screen upon which these truths and principles can be appreciated.

With this foundation and perspective we are free to find the divinely hidden pictures in the mosaic of creation. Let's begin with how the design features for the vastness of the universe were focused through the design features of the Kingdom of God established at Mt Sinai.

Basic physics and basic Scripture

We learned in High School Physics¹ that there are four distinct features comprising our universe. They cannot be reduced or expanded from these four components: time, space, matter and energy. It should be understood that none of these components restrict our Creator or His nature. In Christ's immortalized state he was not constricted by space or matter or energy. As an immortal, time is inconsequential except in the context of his mortal followers. The parallel between the divinely mandated foursquare configuration of the wilderness encampment and the four design components of the universe is only the first stage of the parallel. At the center of each matching design is our Creator. Those four universe components of time, space, matter and energy parallel the inner foursquare encampment of the Levites and priests, surrounding the Tabernacle. Extending out from that inner foursquare spiritual design is the foursquare political design of the 12 tribes, with three separate tribes placed at each of the four sections. This perfectly parallels the laws and observations of the universe. Each of the four universe components can be broken down into exactly three separate divisions... no more and no less.



Time sub-divides into past, present and future. Space sub-divides into height, width and depth. Matter sub-divides into solid, liquid and gas. It is energy where our original perspective separates those with seeing eyes and hearing ears from mere scientific examination. Our physics professor explained there were two main categories of energy: passive and active. Passive energy is potential energy at rest, like a car on a roller coaster at the top of the starting hill. Active or kinetic energy is energy in motion, like the moving car on the roller coaster. There is one other category of energy that understandably escapes the attention of the physicists and scientists. That is the Holy Spirit. It cannot be isolated in a lab or experimented with or measured. The Holy Spirit category of energy cannot be described as merely potential or simply kinetic. This is the third category of energy making the third leg of the fourth universe component. This mirror-like observation between the divine construction of the Kingdom of God at Sinai and the basic features of creation validate our continued pursuit of the veiled glory of our Creator in *the things that have been made*.

Our next commentary will consider the progressive relationship between the creational environment and the spiritual environment. As the spiritual environment

has (and will) changed, so has (and will) the creational environment.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Notes:

1. Of course, modern physics has a more nuanced view of these items, but to our senses there are four.

Bible Study

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis **(2) Excerpt from Study 7: Fiat Lux**

The well-known phrase *fiat lux*, the Latin for “Let there be light” originates in Gen 1:3. From the Latin verb *fiat*, “let it be done,” comes the English noun *fiat*, “a declaration or order made by singular authority.” In current English usage *fiat* usually has a negative, sometimes arbitrary connotation: “The dictator issued a fiat claiming ownership of all sugar plantations.” In Gen 1:3, however, *fiat lux* represents the very first communication from the eternal Creator of the universe. LET THERE BE LIGHT! *Lux* derives from an Indo-European root that gave us *leuko*, as in “leukocyte” (white blood cell) and eventually our word “light.”

Directness of thought and action

The full sentence consists of just four short Hebrew words. Rendered literally but stiffly, it would read, “Let be light, and was light.” When so few words say so much, the impact resounds. The first act of the creation week comes with the utmost possible brevity and therefore the maximum impact. The declaration is short, direct, and pithy.

God, by fiat, opened the beams of heaven. Nowhere else in the creation account does anything come into being by the mere agency of God’s spoken word. In all other instances where God says, “Let there be,” another verb (usually “made” or “created”) follows. Here the simple expression of will produced the desired result, and without any apparent physical source. Of course, God is light, and thus needed no source. Though the sun will not show up for three more days, the creation account seems comfortable with this arrangement. Light has an origin greater than Earth’s sun.

If God had said “Let there be light,” followed by the sentence, “And God created light,” how would that differ from “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light”? Physically the act would look the same to a hypothetical observer, but the text wants to emphasize the directness of the action.

Context of “Let there be light”

At the end of the Prologue, God, manifested in the Spirit, hovers over the surface of the water. Earth at this time is completely covered with water, so when the text states that the Spirit of God hovers upon the face of the water, it means that God hovers over the earth. With nothing before Day One to mark any kind of time,

it would be fruitless to speculate “how long” before the first day God created the earth. The text reveals three facts:

- 1) God created the earth before Day One.
- 2) The earth is dark and desolate, but God is present.
- 3) Then God brings light to the earth.

These three facts connect the hovering of God’s Spirit with the fiat that brings light. The last statement of verse 2, “*the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the waters,*” leads into the first statement of verse 3, “*And God said, “Let there be light.”*” Imagine the darkness, then suddenly light! God is present upon the darkened earth. At the revelation of his will our planet becomes full of his glory. A hypothetical observer can now see the water-covered globe.

Separating light from darkness

The first of the original deficiencies is corrected when darkness gives way to light. Next, God does something remarkable: he separates, or divides, the light from the darkness. Possibly the light diffuses throughout the visible heavens so there is no longer any darkness, but rather a grayish twilight-like haze exists until God separates the light from the darkness. The light makes the earth visible, but is diffused into a subdued glow that will not suffice for the divine plan. God needs yet to separate the light. I think, however, the text presents a different picture of this separation.

Why does God even need to separate light from dark? Aren’t light and dark completely different already? Don’t they naturally separate one from another? What do we learn from this activity?

God’s separating light from dark is the first of two steps to define the function of light. On the fourth day, he will further localize the light into discrete heavenly bodies. For now, God must first separate the light from the darkness. Also, the act of separation itself is a key feature of the creation week, as well as the entirety of Genesis. God is continually separating and selecting to achieve his ends.¹ Separation is inherent in the activities of creation. Making a thing implies that it be defined, at least in part, by what it is not or what it is separated from.

The notion that the light diffuses dimly through the darkness until God separates them may or may not be the case. However, the one clue we have to the process of the separation is not spatial, but temporal. In the cycle of light and dark on the earth, night is dark and day is light. Dark and light occur in the same space, separated in time as Earth rotates on its axis. Darkness and light will naturally fall on different areas of the planet when Earth begins to rotate. Thus, the separation of light from the dark might be a way of referring to Earth commencing its rotation.

Time

Given a rotating Earth and the phrase “evening and morning,” God establishes the concept of time by using alternating periods of light and dark at the same locality. Light follows dark follows light and so on. Evening is listed first (evening

and morning) because evening represents the dark that was already in place when light appeared.

As a by-product, the separation of light from dark creates the concept of “time.” Time is an abstraction, but it can only occur in a physically ordered universe. The creation of light, and its subsequent separation from darkness, installs a parameter that perhaps as no other defines the limitation of our mortal physical world. We live in a world defined by the passage of time. The eternal realm has no reckoning of time. The declaration of “evening and morning” brings the single most defining limit of our existence — time. It runs (for us) only one way, always forward, never backward. Time is the fundamental feature that distinguishes the realm of earthly life from the realm of eternal life.

The activity of separating signifies something profoundly spiritual. The text records this act to teach us that once light exists, it needs also to be *specified* so that its full role and function will be fulfilled. Darkness is the prevailing natural condition into which God brings the light. However, simply having light there won’t do. He also has to specify its role and location so that it can fulfill its purpose.

Naming and approving

Part of specifying the role of light includes giving it a name. God makes the light appear, and he gives it the name “day.” The darkness (the natural state, or the absence of light) becomes “night.” Thus light is named and designated so it can function, awaiting further developments on the fourth day.

God’s approval introduces a new concept. Seeing that the light is good does not involve any creative action. It does not need to be in the text to move the account along. Declaring something good is a value judgment.

The text reads that God sees that the *light* was good. This is the only one of the six “it was good” statements that specifies the object of God’s approval. The remaining five times this formula appears, God sees that “it” is good; the “it” being absent but understood in Hebrew.² This unique construction emphasizes the connection between God and light. The light is good because God is light and God is good.

Thus the first day ends, with evening coming first, then morning. Evening, or dark, the natural state that prevailed until God commanded light, has to come first, then the dawn of the first morning as God directs his light upon Earth. Presumably, and inferred from the phrase “there was evening and morning,” but not stated in the text, the first day ends after one rotation of the planet. At the close of Day One, the earth has light, but it is still without form and void. The work will continue.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. Consider the separation of the waters on the next day, the separation of Abram from his family, Abram from Lot, Isaac from Esau, etc. God separates and selects to achieve a specific purpose.
2. A seventh approbation occurs in Gen 1:31 where God sees that “everything he made” is very good.

First Principles

The Atonement in Practice (2) Cain and Abel

The Atonement should have a profound practical impact on our lives. When we understand what our Lord went through, his victory over the flesh, and over those who put him to death, it should be a motivating force to enable us to live by faith. On the other hand a misunderstanding of the atonement, or a misapplication of the Word of God, can have serious consequences in how we deal with our brothers and sisters. This is the lesson that comes from the story of Cain and Abel.

Last month we had a look at Adam and Eve and the fact that, naturally speaking, we rely on our gut instincts, our animal nature. And now we are going to look at the account of Cain and Abel, which teaches us about the contrast between a man who lived by faith and a man who let his animal instincts direct his thoughts and actions. Abel is the first man recorded in Scripture who lived by faith:

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks” (Heb 11:4).

True righteous living isn't about offering animal sacrifices. We know this from such passages as Hos 6:6, quoted by Jesus — *“I will have mercy and not sacrifice”*. So when we look at the example of Abel we must move beyond just seeing an animal sacrifice. Anyone can offer a sacrifice; it's easy. In fact when we look at the negative example of Cain we'll consider someone who had such a formalistic religion and that type of religion has been copied throughout history.

So what's so special about Abel's sacrifice? Perhaps there's a clue in what Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount where he uses the same word translated “excellent” (Gk. *pleion*) in Heb 11:4.

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed [pleion] the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20).

There are two types of righteousness mentioned here; righteousness by faith and righteousness by works of the law. The scribes and Pharisees were expert at external righteousness and appeared extremely righteous through their ability to do the “right” things. But we know from passages such as Matt 23:25-28 that while they had an outward appearance of righteousness, inwardly they were full of hypocrisy and uncleanness. Our righteousness has to be “more excellent” or “exceed” that type of righteousness. Our righteousness needs to be a righteousness that comes from faith and that's what Abel's righteousness was all about. In contrast to that we'll see that Cain was the first Pharisee. The word *pleion* is also used by Jesus to contrast love with offering sacrifices ritualistically:

“And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more [pleion] than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:33).

Loving God is *more* excellent than burnt offerings and sacrifices. Again, the former describes the religion of Abel and the latter the religion of Cain. When we apply this simple concept to the doctrine of the Atonement an important lesson comes out. There are views of the Atonement that emphasize mechanics and turn salvation into some sort of formula. If we adhere to that sort of idea of what salvation is all about we can end up like the Pharisees and like Cain: looking at salvation as a kind of legal contract between God and us, that if we do certain things God owes us salvation. That was the religion of Cain, but Abel’s understanding of the Atonement was different and he realized that salvation was based on the love of God and living by faith.

Let’s look at Cain first. Without the benefit of hindsight it actually looks like Cain was the good guy and Abel, well, he just did things his own way. When he was born his mother Eve said *“I have gotten a man from Yahweh”* (Gen 4:1) and what she *really* means is that she believed Cain to be the promised seed who would crush the serpent and bring about salvation (Gen 3:15). We can forgive Eve for thinking this since God had promised the seed of the woman would do this, she was the woman, and here was a seed — a seed, she said, from Yahweh. We also find out that Cain was *“a tiller of the ground”* (Gen 4:2) and the offering he brought to Yahweh was the product of him tilling the ground (Gen 4:3). Here Cain seems to be following God’s instructions quite well since in the previous chapter we’re told that God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden *“to till the ground”* (Gen 3:23). To all intents and purposes it looks like Cain is doing the will of God.

In contrast to that Abel was a *“keeper of sheep”* (Gen 4:2) and brought an offering of a lamb (Gens 4:4). God never said anything about keeping sheep. He had said about keeping *the garden* (Gen 2:15) but it looks like Cain was more involved with that by tilling the ground. So it looks like Cain is following God’s instructions and Abel is doing something else entirely. However this isn’t the last time in Scripture things are not quite as they appear. When we come to the contrast between Saul and David later in the series we’ll see this story all over again: Saul the one who seemingly followed God’s instructions and David doing his own thing, like eating the show bread which it was not lawful for anyone but priests to eat. And ultimately we see this same thing with the contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees, for instance when Jesus incensed the legalistic Pharisees by healing on the Sabbath.

When it comes to the Atonement we need to understand this lesson because it’s against our instincts. We want a religion that is easy to follow, like ticking off a list of duties. And when we do our list of duties: pray, do our readings, go to meeting and so on, all of which are necessary things, but lack faith, they are meaningless. When it comes down to it, the difference between Cain and Abel was not about what particular offering they brought but the *attitude* with which they did it. Abel walked by faith, Cain walked by law. Abel’s religion wasn’t a do-your-own-thing religion. He offered a lamb with a sense of purpose that testifies to his spiritual

mind. On the other hand Cain, while appearing to do things in the right way by bringing an offering from tilling the ground, showed his true colours when he murdered his brother. A tree is known by its fruit and Cain's tree was completely corrupt.

Let's look at Cain's character first so we can end on the positive note of what Abel represents for us. In last month's article we looked at the nature of the flesh, that left to ourselves we think in an instinctive animal way. Cain is an example of that sort of mind and helps us understand why the flesh must be mortified. The KJV is rather clumsy in the key verse: the NIV is better here:

"But on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it' " (Gen 4:5-7 NIV).

Cain was angry because his offering was rejected and that's why God spoke the words in verse 7 — *"sin lies at the door"* (KJV). Some understand this to mean that there was a lamb lying at the door of Cain's house and he was being given the opportunity to offer it as sin offering, correcting his earlier mistake. But that would go against the spirit of the passage which is not about the offerings *per se* but about the attitude of the two brothers. God wasn't teaching Cain the importance of offering the correct ritualistic sacrifice. Really what Cain is being told is that sin is like an animal inside him, at the moment lying down, or crouching, but ready to pounce unless he keeps it under control. The phrase at the end of the verse in other versions reads something like: he (sin) desires to rule over you but you must rule over him. That is quite simple to understand. Sin is like an animal inside and it wants to dominate us, but we must instead dominate it, fulfilling the spirit of Gen 1:26, to have dominion over the animals.

Cain's attitude and actions are the prototype of so many other people in Scripture and to the battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman in general. The most notable of these is when the Jews put Jesus to death. Even Pilate recognized *"that for envy they had delivered him"* (Matt 27:18). The Jews let the animal inside, beginning with envy (as Cain's sin began with envy), leap out in murdering the one who Abel points forward to. John's first epistle tells us that Cain murdered Abel *"because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous"* (1 John 3:12), that is, Cain's envy and anger of the acceptance of his brother's offering, caused him to give in to the thinking of the flesh. Those animal instincts are in every one of us and we need to follow God's advice and exhibit self-control in dominating the animal inside. Jesus himself came in the flesh and that's one of the reasons why he had to die on the cross: ultimately the only way to fully dominate the animal is to kill it. It cannot be redeemed, it cannot be saved, it can only be destroyed. Jesus bruised the serpent on its head.

We also see in the example of our Lord the antithesis of Cain's attitude. Cain was envious of his brother, and envy and anger produce murder (Matt 5:22), or as John puts it when talking about Cain:

“Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1John 3:15).

John writes this in the context of discussing the greatest attribute of God — love. To love our brother, John says, is what obedience to God is all about. On the cross Jesus exhibited that love, for *“God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8). The Atonement isn’t just a negative doctrine about dominating the animal; it’s also a positive doctrine about being fruitful, exhibiting the fruit of the spirit. Ultimately the way to dominate the animal is to overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21).

And so we come to the example of Abel who offered a lamb. Why did he offer a lamb? One thing we know is that he offered his best. Whereas Cain brought “of” the fruit of the ground (Gen 4:3), Genesis records that Abel brought *“of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat”* (Gen 4:4). That is, Abel brought his best. But this was not just a random act; Abel did not choose to sacrifice a lamb haphazardly. Look at what had happened previously in the name of true religion. In chapter 3 God himself had provided the example by clothing Adam and Eve with coats of skins (Gen 3:21). In order to do that he would have had to have slain an animal, teaching the principle of the need to put the flesh to death. We can infer that Abel understood this principle and offered a lamb because he was *imitating* God.

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph 5:1-2).

The word translated “followers” can mean “imitators” and that’s what Abel was doing. The fact he walked in love and paid the ultimate price by giving his life all pointed forward to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the doctrine of the atonement. It’s about God manifestation, about being a son or daughter of God and trusting in our father, for the righteous shall live by that faith. By walking in love we shall overcome the animal inside and our participation in the sacrifice of Christ shall indeed rise up to God as a sweet-smelling savour. Loving our brothers and sisters does take sacrifice. It takes patience, it takes kindness, and it takes ruling over the envy or anger we sometimes feel rising up inside us. Some have paid the ultimate price for their sacrifice but like Abel’s, their blood shall speak of the righteous who shall live by faith.

Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON)

Familiar Bible Passages

We are told automobile accidents often happen close to home. Because we are so familiar with the area, we pay less attention. In the same way, familiar passages of Scripture may receive less of our attention. Christians, and many others, know the stories of David and Goliath, Samson and Delilah, and Jonah and the “whale”. We may fail to grasp the meaning and message they were intended to convey because of our superficial understanding of the characters and events.

Robert Deffinbaugh

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Teaming Up: A Case Study in Sunday School Team Teaching

Twenty years ago, two sisters teamed up to teach a large group of Sunday school children. The venture was born out of circumstances, but it ended up being one of the happiest times in their long Sunday school teaching careers. They worked together for five years. The story is retold here in their own words and is based on an interview that was held with the sisters at the time they were teaching together.



Q. How long have the two of you been working together as a team?

A. This is our second year.

Q. Please describe the class of children with which you work.

A. We started out with a possible 12 children; nine girls and three boys ranging in age from seven to ten. The youngest were just beginning readers, and the oldest, a girl, has severe learning disabilities. She attends a private day school for children with special needs. We have since lost three girls from the class, two of whom have moved away and one of whom no longer attends for other reasons. The remaining children now range in age from eight to 12.

Q. Why did you start teaching as a team?

A. Circumstances. We had two lopsided classes of elementary-age children, one very small and one very large. We were reluctant to break up the larger group in order to create even-sized classes because these children had already developed close relationships with each other. When we could find no satisfactory way in which to evenly divide the teaching load between us, we hit on the idea of merging the two classes and teaching together. At the same time we were introduced to the idea of using Bible learning centers and started using these with the children. We did not fully appreciate it at the beginning, but the centers have been a big help in accommodating the different interests and abilities of the children. Centers have proved to be a key part of the success of this merger. (An article on Bible learning centers is planned for next month, God willing.)

Q. What do the two of you do on a normal Sunday? How do you share the teaching load?

A. First of all, as the children arrive, either of us hears them, individually, with their memory lessons. We also collect their homework before class begins. Ideally the lesson itself includes whole-group instruction for about half the time and learning center activities for half the time. Depending on how much of the hour is occupied with opening and closing exercises, this comes down to 20-minutes

or so for each half of the instruction. While one of us teaches the whole-group lesson during the first part of the class period, the other one updates the record book, corrects homework, prepares the children's lesson books for the following week and, if necessary, jots off a quick note to any absentees to keep them up to date. (We mail these notes on the way home from meeting.) Both of us often help with the centers during the last part of the period. We alternate roles more or less from week to week, depending on the lesson topic and scheduling considerations. Occasionally one of us will take the teaching role for two weeks in a row to complete a larger lesson or cover when the other person is away. With rare exceptions, however, both of us are always present and involved with the children. This is not a case of taking turns teaching Sunday school. It is a 200% commitment to the kids, not a 50% commitment.

Q. How does this differ from the situation where a teacher simply has an assistant in the class?

A. We view ourselves as co-teachers. And on any given Sunday the extra person is not just another pair of hands, but is fine-tuned into what is going on in the class. Over the course of the year we share the work equally. With a teacher and an assistant, the teacher carries the full responsibility of getting everything together every week.

Q. How do the two of you plan things?

A. Planning, in the broad sense, is carried out together, but we don't want to give the impression that every last detail is worked out between us. The first thing we do is to think through a block of lessons and set up a teaching schedule. We have a prepared Sunday school curriculum that we go by, and we decide which one of us is going to teach which lessons. This clearly has to be thought through together. After this, though, the person who is going to teach a given lesson has the primary responsibility for preparing that lesson. Of course, if either of us has good material on something that the other person is going to teach, we make it available. And we talk to each other quite a lot on the phone. We each have different strengths and by talking together we often help each other come up with ideas of things to do.

Q. This leads directly to another question. What advantages have you found in working together as a team?

A. There are several.

- Working together has brought us much closer to each other as sisters in Christ. We have come to see that there is good Bible precedent for what we are doing. The Lord sent his disciples in pairs to teach the kingdom of God. The yoke of oxen provides a nice analogy as well. We help each other along instead of each one trying to pull the whole load.
- Planning is easier. With input from each other, we constantly have fresh ideas to work with.
- Both of us have personal inventories of teaching materials to contribute to the lessons.
- We don't have the constant pressure of preparing and teaching every week,

the way you do if you're doing everything alone.

- When Sunday comes around, the one who is teaching can get right into the lesson because the other one is handling the bookkeeping.
- Also, in a year and a half, we have never needed a substitute teacher. One of us has always been present and prepared to teach.

Q. Do you think the children benefit from this merger as much as you do?

A. Yes. We certainly believe that the children have benefitted as well.

- The fact that two teachers are committed to them rather than one sends an important message.
- The continuity we can maintain, even if one of us is absent, gives the children a real sense of stability, too.
- The enlarged class has created a wider circle of relationships for the children. All of our elementary-age boys and girls are together.
- The spirit of cooperation that we have as co-teachers seems to be rubbing off on the children and, interestingly enough, problems we used to encounter have diminished significantly: the peer pressure, squabbling, bickering.
- With both of us involved as teachers, the children benefit from the strengths of two people, not one, and also get some variety in the approach to things from week to week.
- Each of us also has a child in the class. Because we alternate teaching roles, our children don't always have "Mom" as a teacher.
- Our use of Bible learning centers has also done a lot to stimulate the children's enthusiasm for Sunday school.

Q. Have you experienced any significant disadvantages in the team approach?

A. The major disadvantage has been the frustration of running out of class time on Sunday before running out of material and activities, and knowing that you are not scheduled to teach again the next week. It is not uncommon, either, to come to the end of a class period and have a difficult time pulling the kids away from a center activity they are working on. The kids have gotten nicely into the flow of things, and we could really use more time.

Q. Would you encourage other Sunday schools to try a team approach to teaching?

A. Yes, definitely. But certain things are needed to make it work, including the right combination of people. Compatibility between teachers is important. It would be better to work alone and run centers by yourself than to try and team up with someone who is not compatible.

Q. Do you think the team approach has potential for all Sunday school age levels?

A. Yes. The concept is certainly applicable to all levels. *(Given the success of this model, the Sunday school subsequently applied it to the kindergarten class; i.e., the non-readers. This had its own set of advantages. Three brothers also agreed to form a teaching team and combine two teen classes, following a similar model and using appropriate learning center activities for teens.)*

Q. This raises another question. A lot of Sunday schools have difficulty finding one teacher for some classes, let alone two or three. Doesn't this make teaming up out of the question for many Christadelphian Sunday schools?

A. It's important to keep in mind if you are merging two classes as we did, that you already have two teachers in place, assuming they can work together as a team. And if you have to recruit a new teacher, it is probably going to be easier to ask someone to work on a team than it is to persuade them to do everything alone. In the case of our kindergarten and teen classes, we had people who were willing to join a team effort, especially after they had seen this approach work with our elementary children. If a Sunday school wants to try a team approach, it may be advisable to start with one class and see how it goes.

Q. One final question. Based on your experience so far, what do you see as the essential ingredients for making the team approach work?

A. Love the Truth. Love the children. Be committed to Sunday school teaching. Beyond this, we've mentioned compatibility. You have got to be able to work together. You've got to talk with each other. You've got to make decisions together. You've got to plan broad aspects of the program together. You've got to share ideas and materials unselfishly. You also need flexibility with each other and with new ideas. If something doesn't work, you go back to the drawing board together. Most important, though, you have to share a philosophy of teaching; you have to be on the same wavelength. If one person thinks it is important to have all the answers and acts as if he or she is the one who has them, the team approach is probably not going to work. By the same token, a person who is unwilling to make any independent decisions probably will not work well on a team, either.

Based on an interview with Sisters Patricia Hemingray and Esther Harper

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Youth Speaks

The daughters of Zelophehad

(3) Receiving the Promise

What would happen to the inheritance? Would God allow their family name to be blotted out? What would Yahweh decide?

Questions like this would have raced through the minds of the daughters of Zelophehad. They presented their plea to Moses and waited for a response. In this final article, we will see God's gracious answer towards them and we will be reminded of God's love for all of those who desire their inheritance.

There they stood. Zelophehad's daughters were before Moses awaiting God's decision. As was his custom, Moses brought the question before Yahweh:

"And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, the daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them" (Num 27:5-7).

The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. Their spiritual reasoning and thinking was sound and was vindicated by God. Their desire to keep their family focused on the Truth and connected to the Father was rewarded. Their father's name would not be blotted out — in fact, it would be more well-known than anyone else's in his family! His name would be made a great name, and his inheritance would be passed on to his daughters.

Thus the law was changed, so that it was now possible for a man's daughters to inherit the land, and other provisions were made in the ensuing verses, in the case that the man also had no daughters. The courage, the wisdom, and the love for their family's connection to Yahweh was justified in the sight of all of the congregation — and once the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land under Joshua, they were given that promised inheritance.

Getting the inheritance

"There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he was the firstborn of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan. There was also a lot of the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hepher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Manassah the son of Joseph by their families" (Joshua 17:1-2).

This is Manasseh's inheritance. Gilead and some of his children received the land over on the other side of Jordan, the land that they had requested in Numbers 32. In addition, there was another section divided off for Manasseh, to be split

between six of the sons of Gilead — Abiezer (which, by the way, was the family of Gideon; Jdgs 6:11), Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida.

“But Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren. Therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father” (Joshua 17:3-4).

Here are the special sisters. As the descendants of Hephher, they approached Joshua, and reminded him of the promise that God had given to them. They were to keep their family’s name alive and inherit the portion of their father. They were the inheritors of Zelophehad’s portion, which would be the portion of Hephher; the rest of the land would then be given to five other sons of Gilead. Thus, we would expect to see the land divided out into *six different portions*, one for the descendants of each of those sons of Gilead:

*“And there fell **ten portions to Manasseh**, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan” (Josh 17:5).*

Yet, when the inheritance was divided to the families, something strange happened! There were six families inheriting the land — but instead of six portions being given to the tribe of Manasseh, they were given ten! There were ten portions of land, and the descendants of each of the six sons would have been given a portion. This leaves four extra portions. Where did these come from?

Perhaps if we count the heirs a bit differently we will find an answer. There were six sons of Gilead and each of their descendants were going to receive a portion; in other words, there were the five daughters of Zelophehad (descendants of Hephher) and the descendants of the five other sons of Gilead. If you add up the five daughters and the five sons, the sum is ten. This is where the ten portions came from! Each of the daughters was given one of their own and then the descendants of the other five sons of Gilead each received a portion. The chapter goes on to explain that this is exactly what happened:

“Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh’s sons had the land of Gilead” (Josh 17:6).

The reason for the extra four portions was because the daughters of Manasseh — the daughters of Zelophehad — had an inheritance with Manasseh’s sons. And isn’t that wonderfully appropriate that it was the daughters of Zelophehad, the ones who recognized the meaning of the inheritance, the ones who understood that it was to be used for God’s honor, and the ones who desired to use it as such, were given more inheritance than anyone else? They were the *children* of the generation that was supposed to inherit the land, yet they received one lot of inheritance each — because they understood the principle, and because they longed to use their inheritance to bring glory to God.

The Lesson

This is just the beginning of the story of the daughters of Zelophehad—though this series of articles is finished, the daughters can continue to give us encouragement and a beautiful example to follow. In our own personal study, we can trace their story throughout the pages of Scripture — they come up again in Numb 36, and it is almost as though we can see their shadow in the Lord's parable of the five wise virgins.

The daughters of Zelophehad give us a beautiful example of spiritual sisters who knew God's principles and were willing to do whatever was necessary to ensure that they could give glory and praise to God with their inheritance. They didn't just desire it because it would give them a highly valued material possession, but instead they longed for it because they knew what it meant for their father's name, and they knew that by having it, they could use it in the service of Yahweh. They didn't care that they had to first go to the judge of one hundred, then the judge of one thousand, and finally to appear before the great Moses and Eleazar the priest. They were filled with zeal for God, with a knowledge of His values and with a love for His name.

We too should strive to think like this — to be those who do all that we can to receive our inheritance — the Kingdom of God — not just because we think that it will be exciting to be immortal, or not just because it will be enjoyable for us, but because we love our Father's name! We should long and strive to be in the Kingdom, because with our inheritance we will be able to glorify God in a way that we have never been able to before.

This is something that is so easy to forget, yet also something that the daughters of Zelophehad demonstrate to us. They wanted their inheritance because by having it, they could bring more praise to the Father in Heaven. We too should get excited about the Kingdom because we know that it is there that the whole world will learn the Truth and that God will finally receive the honor that He deserves! We know that our lives will no longer be tarnished by sin, and God will be able to be worshiped in purity.

This is the kind of attitude which Yahweh seeks in His children — and this is the same type of attitude which is beautifully shown to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Glory of the Lord

All throughout His life, our Lord worked to demonstrate the glory of the Father. He was the perfect manifestation of God, the express image of His person. Everything he did brought honor to God's name. In some of his last words to his disciples before he was crucified, which was also a prayer to his Father, he made it clear that Yahweh's honor was his purpose:

- *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).*
- *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world..." (John 17:6).*
- *"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it..." (John 17:26).*

And notice how it was that he began this prayer:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (John 17:1).

“Glorify thy son,” he said. He wanted to be given that eternal life — yet note the reason why: “that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

The Lord Jesus wanted to be given eternal life. He desired to be given his inheritance so that as an immoral being, he could bring even more praise to his Father than he could before. What an example that is for us. Just like the daughters of Zelophehad, it wasn't about the physical inheritance. Instead, it was about the glory of God. It was about the Father's honor. As a result of that attitude, Christ was given eternal life and now sits at the right hand of God. May we seek to have that attitude along with the Lord and may we strive to be in that Kingdom — not for our own glory, but for the glory of our Father in Heaven.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

What is Lost Belongs to God

R.C. Trench writes of “the proverbs that have grown out of an incident, which contain an allusion to it, and are only perfectly intelligible when the incident itself is known.” He cites an example in the Spanish proverb, “Let that which is lost be for God.”

The story of this proverb's birth is given by a Spanish writer, cited by Trench: “The father of a family, making his will and disposing of his goods upon his deathbed, ordained concerning a certain cow which had strayed, and had been now for a long time missing, that, if it was found, it should be for his children, if not found, for God: and hence the proverb...”

Trench continues: “The saying was not one to let die; laying bare as so wonderfully it does some of the subtlest treacheries of the human heart; for, indeed, whenever men would give to God only their lame and their blind, that which costs them nothing, that from which they hope no good, no profit, no pleasure for themselves, what are they saying in their hearts but that which this man said openly, ‘Let that which is lost be for God.’”

“You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’ By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?... Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?” — says the LORD Almighty” (Mal 1:7-9).

Tidings on Facebook

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

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (2) Guideline Number 1: Choose wisely

What attracts a man to a woman and vice versa? This has been considered one of the great mysteries of life. We are told in Proverbs that *“There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:..... the way of a man with a maid”* (Prov 30:18-19). With the exception of Adam and Eve, every man and woman has had options. The mystery is exactly how does one decide to make a particular choice? This has been the subject of many sociological studies. The mere fact that there is not a definite answer that even the so-called experts agree upon, is testimony enough as to the enduring validity of the insight of the Proverbs. But that doesn't mean we cannot try to put some sense into our relationships, and use the Word of God to provide us guidelines as to how to do our best to make a wise choice. Certainly that is what many Internet dating services claim to do, by putting on file your personality profile and selling you their ability to match you with the perfect choice for a lifelong companion!

In our society today the norm for providing a means for “boy meets girl” revolves around the custom of “dating” whereby men and women are involved with a number of prospective mates until such time as they say in romance novels that “they find their soul mate” — whatever that means! The custom of “dating” is actually a rather new social invention going back approximately 100 years and is still not generally the custom in many areas of the world. For thousands of years previously the decision on who to marry were almost exclusively family-to-family decisions, and the couples involved were expected to live with that decision. This happened not just in Royal families, where dynastic and political considerations governed (as was clearly the case in the large retinue of wives King Solomon collected), but also even in the humblest of families until relatively recent times. The idea is that the wisdom and experience of parental elders were far more reliable in picking a suitable mate for their children, than the whim of the youngsters themselves. Naturally those days are gone forever in our society, and I doubt that the parents arranged your marriage for most of my married readers. Moreover, it is probable that in at least a significant number of cases either or both sets of parents may not have completely approved of the choice of marriage partners of their offspring.

Even more challenging is how much the dating scene has changed in the last 10 years or so. In the past, most dating arrangements were made by parents, relatives, friends, colleagues, or in clubs, churches, workplace, etc. where there was at least some prior pool of personal knowledge. This would lead both parties to think that there would be some degree of compatibility in dating each other. It didn't always work, but clearly the model was (and still mostly is) that unmarried men and women are in an “open market” whereby they try to find the most suitable mate possible, given what they have to offer. This model has changed somewhat

in recent years by the advent of the Internet whereby youngsters (and oldsters for that matter) can connect via Chat rooms, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, various dot-com dating services, etc. Recent statistics have revealed that approximately 20% of newly married couples have initially met through some sort of Internet media.¹ Internet dating services work on the principle of “like marries like”, and generally give much less weight to the other old adage that “opposites attract.”

These two broad models of attraction will be considered in detail in what follows. In Song 2:2 we read — “*As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*” Solomon’s words make it clear that physical attraction is an important aspect for falling in love with someone. The model for that attraction in times past was based on a limited set of data usually revolving around our family, friends, and neighbors in one’s village. It is not by accident that, in these circumstances, many men married women somewhat in the image of their mothers, and women in the image of their fathers. However, with the vast increase in media over the past century this has changed drastically, and the standard for beauty has expanded far more than the poetic “lily among thorns.” When one observes the beauty personified in magazines, TV, Hollywood, Internet, etc. most of us cannot measure up. Having such unrealistic expectations can lead one to incredibly impossible requirements for selecting a mate, and in the long run in staying committed to a marriage. The average American female, in the age range 20 to 74 years old, is 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighs 160.3 lbs — contrast this to the average for female models where 5 feet 10 inches tall and 115 lbs is the norm. For men the situation is slightly closer to reality, with the average height 5 feet 9½ inches tall and weight of 191 lbs, but most men would still not pass a model agencies’ job selection, since they all like their men over 6 feet tall, much slimmer and better looking too!² My point here should be obvious — modern society engenders unrealistic expectations in us, in terms of purely physical attributes. This can blind us to the more spiritual qualities that serve to bind two people together in a life-long happy marriage. Looks may be an initial attractor, but without exception they will eventually fade. It has been said that every man marries a woman he hopes will never change (in terms of beauty) and a woman marries a man she hopes she can change (in terms of character), and both are invariably disappointed!

What then should one be looking for in a mate? There is no magic formula that can tell anyone who is the perfect “someone” for him or her, but the scriptures give us some excellent guidelines. This focuses on the moral character that we should search out in a person that we would consider for a potential mate. First and foremost is a love for the Word of God. The Psalmist David wrote: “*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night*” (Psa 1:1-2, ESV). There are several very important keys here to look for not only in a suitable mate, but also as a guide in refining our own character. After all, the better person we are ourselves the more likely we will be to attract a person of high moral standards. If someone delights in the “*law of the LORD*”, isn’t that exactly the type of person a God-fearing individual would want as a friend? One should shy away from anyone who keeps company with people

of bad character, which is exactly what it means if one walks in the counsel of the wicked and associates with sinners and scoffers. If you catch someone in a lie, or find they have an ill temper, or are prone to substance abuse — these are character flaws that are unlikely to improve, and one had best avoid such a person. This is not to say that forgiveness is impossible, but for every rehabilitated abusive person there are plenty who only get worse once they are in a marriage.

The apostle Paul tells us to marry “...*only in the Lord*” (1Cor 7:39). He didn’t have to belabor the point because the Old Testament made it clear that to marry out of the household of faith was an offense against God (cf. Ezra 10 and Neh 13, for example). How pagan women such as Jezebel, Delilah, and the many alien wives of Solomon had perverted their mates were no doubt stories familiar to the apostle’s audience, and they should be to us. It is a sad ending indeed to read of Solomon that when he was old “*his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God*” (1Kgs 11:3-4). The command to marry only in the household of faith was not given to us to make life hard, but in fact to make our walk to the kingdom easier. When a household is united in the faith there are a mutual support and working relationship that help us lead godly lives, and moreover, if the couple is blessed with children, create a sound environment for bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). However, finding the right partner in the faith is not a trivial task, especially in our small community of believers. How do you maximize your opportunities for success in finding a true marriage partner?

It probably should be obvious that the law of averages is in our favor. The more times we try something, generally the better will be our chances for success. Thus we maximize our chances of finding the right someone, if we look only for someone who is first and foremost a faithful and dedicated believer in the things concerning Jesus Christ. This must be true for us first, in addition to whatsoever other standards we may be looking for, whether consciously or unconsciously. Thus, if one is blessed to be in an area where there is a large ecclesial presence, with well-run and strongly supported CYC activities, it would be extremely wise for parents to see that their children attend at every possible opportunity. Similarly, attending Bible schools, CYC gatherings, campaigns, and study weekends should certainly fill a young person’s calendar, for this is where there is a chance of meeting a wide array of suitable young people. And today, the various media available to us such as Facebook and Internet Chat Rooms can be a vice, or can be a great vehicle for our young people to get to know each other whether near and far. However, a word of caution is unfortunately also necessary here. Parents should carefully monitor such usage, and it is also important for ecclesias to educate their young people. There are many excesses leading to sinfulness that are possible in misusing the plethora of modern media. Today it is possible to view on your cell phone, tablet, or computer such things that were once relegated to proverbial red light districts of society. We need to shun such evils for they make a mockery of the Truth — “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*” (Rom 1:18).

Not everyone is blessed by living in such relatively ideal ecclesial surroundings. Even if living in an area with a large ecclesial presence, one may still not be able to meet a potential mate that satisfies all of one's longings. Also, sometimes it is just plain difficult with someone you have grown up with as a friend, to suddenly regard him or her as a romantic companion, and instead one ends up treating him or her as virtually a blood sibling. The reality is that we are a small community, and we are not a monastic or insular group that has totally isolated ourselves from the world in the manner, for example, of the Amish (cf. 1Cor 5:10). The fact is that even in one area of North America where there is a large ecclesial presence, with a large array of CYC activities, and a bountiful number of Sunday school scholars — when I actually did the numbers I found nearly half the married couples had a partner who had come from outside our community. There are also a large number of areas with small, somewhat isolated ecclesias where it is nearly impossible to have much more than fleeting opportunities to meet other young Christadelphians. Moreover, not everyone has the financial resources available from family, or self, to take advantage of all the places one might travel to meet others of like mind. If one is brought up in a household where only one parent is a Christadelphian it can be doubly difficult to take advantage of the broader opportunities available at Bible schools, gatherings, etc. Finally, there is just the simple perversity of the human spirit that makes it a mystery of what attracts a man to woman and vice versa. A mother or father (or both) might feel there are a dozen nearby eligible suitors for their child that would make an ideal mate, only to find their child is completely oblivious. What is one to do then when one finds an attractive companion, who is of interest romantically and who is not a member of our community?

The best advice I have seen for this situation is: “the introduction of one’s spiritual interest in the faith should be made at the start of a friendship, and its overwhelming importance for you should be emphasized. The danger of friendships outside the Faith is that one’s hope of the Kingdom may not be revealed until one is emotionally deeply involved...”³ By then it may be too late to be convincing to the friend, and even more sadly we may find ourselves too weak spiritually to follow the right course. The consequences of our failure to speak out early and plainly is that we could find ourselves in for a lifetime of being unequally yoked to an unbeliever (2Cor 6:14).⁴

The actions of the ecclesia of the young person involved with someone outside the household of faith can often make all the difference on whether or not that person responds to the Word of God, instead of taking the modern attitude of “you do your thing and I’ll do mine.” An ecclesia that provides a loving and friendly atmosphere to visitors is an important aspect of someone feeling comfortable in exploring the Truth further. The same can be said for CYC activities. One shouldn’t expect an outsider to come to a Christadelphian CYC exhibiting all our norms of behavior, be it showing up without a head-covering for women (if that is the local custom); or more challenging, to cite one possible example, the visitor displaying multiple tattoos and piercings!⁵ It takes wise spiritual leadership of CYC activities to make the outsider welcome regardless of whether or not that person meets our norms.

That will come with time if the person is truly interested; if not, the behavior of the person will be manifest to the Christadelphian companion, and they should be trusted to make a wise choice for themselves.

Next: Guideline Number 2: Making love last.

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Notes:

1. U.S.A. Today.
2. Data from the Center for Disease Control, 2002 and the “The Professional’s Guide to Modeling.”
3. The New Life, no. 11-Courtship, John Marshall, *The Christadelphian Magazine*, Vol. 106, 1969.
4. A subject of a later essay will deal with the situation when one partner is not in the household of Faith.
5. James 2:1-9 is a good guide to how we ought to behave in such circumstances.

Why was Jesus Baptized?

It is commonly thought that Jesus was baptized as an example to us to be baptized. Just why did Jesus feel the need to be baptized? I don’t think that being baptized as an example for us to be baptized is the answer. The reason for Jesus’ baptism goes deeper than that. We’ll come back to the question shortly.

But first, let’s join John the Baptist at the Jordan River in the weeks before Jesus came to him to be baptized. We tend to read about John urging the people to repent and be baptized, and we may think, “Yes, that’s what Jesus later told his disciples — ‘Go out into the world and preach, and tell people they must repent and be baptized.’”

But what John was doing was very different. You see, he was telling the **Jews** that they must repent of their sins and be baptized.

Apart from the Essenes, baptism for repentance of sins was not part of Judaism. The Jews knew and practiced baptism, but not for themselves. They only practiced baptism when a non-Jewish person, a proselyte, wanted to join Judaism. These proselytes were impure in the eyes of the Jews, and they needed to be baptized because of their impurity. But not so for Jews. They were God’s chosen people. They were descendants of Abraham. For these reasons, they, in their own eyes, were spiritually pure and they didn’t need to repent or be baptized.

So John’s message contained a new message for the Jews. He was telling them they must repent of their sins and be baptized. He knew what they thought about themselves — they regarded themselves as pure because they were descendants of Abraham. That’s why John challenged them:

“Don’t begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’ ”

He lashed out at them, “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance . . . Even now, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

John didn’t mince his words with his fellow Jews. And they listened to him, and

many responded to his message. Tax collectors came, and soldiers, and crowds of others to repent of their sins and be baptized by John in the Jordan River.

It seems that in the hearts and minds of many Jews at that time, there was a need for a spiritual awakening. What John taught them caused them to think about themselves and look deep into their hearts. They were far from happy with the system of religion as practiced by the priests of their time. The priests were not teaching the love of God, they were not showing compassion to the people, they were corrupt and self-centered.

This had been going on for a long time. Malachi, who wrote 400 years before the birth of Jesus, wrote of the priests of his time, speaking of Israel as the wife of their youth:

“The LORD was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless. . . You have wearied the Lord with your words, yet you say, ‘How have we wearied Him?’ By saying every one who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them.” (Mal 3:14, 17, RSV¹).

The priests had forsaken the work God had given them to do, and the people were suffering for it. What John told the people made sense. They were sinners in need of forgiveness. They wanted to come closer to God. Repentance and baptism was the start of this process. So the Jews listened to John the Baptist, and many were baptized.

Far to the north, about 75 miles (120 km) away in Capernaum, Jesus heard of the work of John the Baptist. He had been waiting for this. He was told of John’s message to the Jews that they must repent and be baptized. He heard that many were responding, and that John was baptising crowds of people.

Jesus was well aware from the Hebrew scriptures that a forerunner would come to prepare the way for him, the Messiah. He knew well the words of Isaiah:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord” (Matt 3:3, quoting Isa 40:3).

Jesus knew that John the Baptist was that person. He knew that the time had come for him to do the work he had been born to do. He had been sent to take away the sin of the world. There was only one way to do that. Jesus had to die as a sacrifice for sin.

Before sin can be forgiven, repentance for sin must first be felt. Because Jesus came to take away sin, John’s message of preparation was exactly right. The Jews (and later the Gentiles) must first repent and then be baptized. That was to be the message of Jesus, and John prepared the way of Jesus perfectly. It was a new and powerful message for the Jews. But it was just the beginning. The Jews were about to meet their Messiah, although not in the way they expected.

Jesus was now about 30 years old. He not only knew and understood the scriptures perfectly, and all the prophecies concerning himself, but for all of his life, he had communed with his Father, no doubt often going out into the hills around Naza-

reth during the night, and speaking to his Father as the moon and stars beamed down on him in the stillness and silence of the hills.

So, Jesus, now 30, realises that his work as God's Son must now begin. He sets out alone (he had no disciples at this point) to walk the long 75 mile (120 km) journey from Capernaum to Bethany on the Jordan, where John the Baptist is baptising.

John at the Jordan

Let's now return to John at the Jordan, and join him while Jesus makes his long walk from Capernaum. John knew that his role was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Although he was a cousin of Jesus, he had never met him. But he had been told, probably by an angel, that someone would come to him. John was to prepare the way for this person. John was in no doubt that this person was to be sent to him by God. John had been told that this person would be extremely special in God's sight. He knew he would come to take away the sin of the world, and that he would be called the Lamb of God. John had also been told that he would see the Holy Spirit descend and remain on this person (John 1:29-34).

As John waited, day after day, week after week, for this person to come to him, his work was to tell the Jews that they must repent and be baptized. This prepared the way for Jesus, whose central focus would be to achieve forgiveness of sins through repentance and baptism. We can imagine John, always watching as he preached, watching, waiting, for this person to come. He knew enough about him to know that he, John, was not even worthy to untie this stranger's sandal strap.

Jesus is now near the end of his long journey. He sees John talking to a crowd of people by the river. He walks down towards him.

The Baptism of Jesus

John looks up and sees Jesus approaching. As he looks at him, he knows immediately that this is the person he'd been watching and waiting for. As John saw Jesus approaching, he said spontaneously, ***"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (John 1:29). John had been preaching repentance to the Jews. This man would take away the sin, not only of the Jews, but of the whole world!

Jesus walked up to John. He said to him, "I would like you to baptize me." John was astounded. He knew this man was God's sacrificial Lamb who would take away the sin of the world! And he wanted John to baptize him?

He replied to Jesus, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

And Jesus answered, and we can hear the gentleness in his answer to John: *"Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness"* (Matt 3:15).

Note that Jesus included John in this answer — *"thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness."* He didn't command John to baptize him. He said in effect, "let's do this together, to fulfil all righteousness."

This was the way of Jesus. He included people and dealt with them gently. No wonder the people loved him. He exuded a love and understanding that was never seen in the priests. We see this gentleness and love in all his dealings with people.

Why did Jesus feel the need to be baptized? Well, he said it was to “fulfil all righteousness”. What does that mean? John preached repentance of sins and baptism. But Jesus was sinless. Some may say that Jesus was only sinless after he was baptized, and that he may have sinned during the first 30 years of his life.

I don’t accept that for a moment. The scriptures tell us that Jesus never committed sin. And never means never. He was sinless all of his life. So he didn’t need to repent of any sin, as we do.

Why did Jesus ask John to baptize him? I suggest there were two reasons why Jesus asked John to baptize him, and neither of them has anything to do with repentance.

First, his baptism was a symbolic looking forward to his death and resurrection in 3½ years’ time. At this very beginning of his ministry, here in the Jordan River, Jesus publicly indicated that he was prepared to die for the sins of the world, and that he knew he would be raised to life again. It was his public “statement” that he would die and be resurrected. This was the core of his mission as the Messiah.

When we are baptized, our baptism represents being associated with Jesus’ death and resurrection in the past. But the baptism of Jesus looked forward to when he would be killed and three days later raised from death to life again.

His death and resurrection were the prime purpose of his ministry. He came not as a King on this occasion, but as the sacrificial Lamb. His mission was to give his life in death so that life would be given to you and me. *“The wages of sin is death”*. Even one sin means death for us. *“But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom 6:23).

And the words of Jesus himself: *“Greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). We are his friends, together with all those who follow him.

So, his baptism was a symbolic sign of his mission — death and resurrection. It showed what was to come. Of course, no one at the Jordan on that day who saw Jesus baptized would understand that. That would come later. For us, who have the benefit of hindsight, the foreshadowing of his death and resurrection in his baptism is clear.

The second reason for his baptism is that it indicated his commitment to his Father. It showed openly that he was willing to submit to death for his Father’s sake, knowing that his Father would raise him to life again.

This was why God sent His Spirit to descend on Jesus like a dove, as He spoke the words, *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”* (Matt3:17).

What did Jesus mean when he said to John that his baptism was to fulfil all righteousness? Did it mean that Jesus was righteous in being baptized? Did it reflect the righteousness of God? Did it mean that he was baptized in righteousness as an example for us to be baptized? It meant none of these things.

We don’t have to guess what he meant, for John tells us: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

Ultimate righteousness is found in declaring someone righteous who isn't righteous. Declaring someone righteous who is a sinner.

God was prepared to forgive our sins and to grant us life instead of death by giving His only beloved Son to die for us.

Jesus was prepared to suffer cruelty and death so that we may have our sins forgiven and have everlasting life. *"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22).*

In those two supreme acts of selflessness and love, we see the righteousness of our Father and of His Son. Because of the sinlessness and righteousness of Jesus, our Lord, we are declared to be righteous before God. This is the fulfilling of all righteousness that Jesus spoke to John about. The wonderful words of Paul confirm this:

*"You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, **in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him** (Col 1:21-22).*

God seeks righteousness in all things. He is righteous, Jesus is righteous, and Jesus reconciles us to God through his death so that we, too, are righteous in him.

And there was something else about the baptism of Jesus that was unique. In sending the Holy Spirit to descend on Jesus like a dove, this was the sign that, through Jesus, God was going to introduce His Spirit to underpin the new covenant between Himself and mankind. This new, Spirit-filled covenant was to be initiated by His Son. In this, we must also remember that we are a part of that new covenant that is sealed not just by the waters of baptism, but by the Spirit as well. John the Baptist made it clear that all baptisms from Jesus onwards are by water and the Spirit:

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matt 3:11).

So, in our lives after baptism, we know that we have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts to help us in our walk to the Kingdom. Paul confirms this:

"You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.... If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit which dwells in you" (Rom 8:9,11).

We have been given unimaginable riches through our Lord Jesus. If it were not for Jesus, we would be dead, with no hope whatever. So it is that we rejoice in the words of Hebrews: *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22).*

Jesus was baptized a long time ago, but his baptism and his subsequent death and resurrection is just as relevant to us today as it was then. As Jesus said: *"I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:17-18).*

And finally, in the words of one of our hymns we see our exalted Lord, with whom God was (and is) well pleased:

“Behold My servant, see him rise
Exalted in My might:
Him have I chosen, and in him
I place supreme delight.”

Ian Hyndman (Beechworth, AUS)

Notes:

1. All Bible references are from the RSV.

Examining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (The Mormons) Part 1

Personal Story

My spiritual journey saw me raised throughout my formative years as a Catholic, never opening the actual Bible to read it, much less study it. In my early teens I made the acquaintance of two friends who were Protestant. They began to enlighten me about contradictions of Scripture with my Catholic faith. At 18 years of age I left the Catholic Church.

For the next few decades of my life I explored many of the mainstream Christian churches, and I have been baptised no less than four times at various points. One of the last churches I attended was the Mormon Church. I was a member for quite some time until they excommunicated me. I dared to question the hierarchy whose positions were, after all, “divinely appointed”.

Throughout those years I continued to learn of the Scriptures. It would be after leaving the Mormons that I would come into the Truth. I realized that our Almighty Father was preparing me for what was to come. Because of this I recognized the Truth as soon as it was presented to me. I was baptised on June 25, 2011. This was my fifth baptism all totalled, but I finally got it right. Ironically, in terms of biblical numerology, five is the number of grace.

Introduction

Formally established in 1830, the commonly referred to “LDS” (Latter Day Saint) church was originally founded in upstate New York. Here, a 14 year old boy named Joseph Smith Jr lived a rural farm life with his family. His father, a mason of many years, led a very devout and spiritual home. The reading of the Bible was a daily occurrence. Around 1820, one of the many travelling, evangelical “revival” groups visited the area.

There was great religious confusion at the time, leading the young boy to search for answers in the Scriptures. Citing “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God... and it shall be given him” (James 1:5), Joseph retired to a clearing in a nearby wooded area, now known among Mormons as the sacred grove. His intention was to pray for clarity; to ask of God which church he should join. As he knelt

and began to seek such guidance, he states he had a vision. A light from above descended and two glorious figures apparently stood before him in the air. The one, the Almighty Father, addressed the boy stating of the other, "This is my beloved son; Hear him." In Joseph Smith's own words, "When I came to myself...", he states that he was able to ask which church was representative of the true gospel. He was evidently instructed by our Lord Jesus Christ to attend none of them, to return home, and wait for further instruction. Upon arriving home Joseph went to join his father to work in the fields. He collapsed, and when he came to consciousness again, regaled his father of all that had taken place. His father, believing it to be of God, sent his son home to rest.

Shortly thereafter, Joseph Smith says that he received another vision. This time he was about to retire for the night. As he lay in the dark of his room, a light, he says, began to gather. It continued to grow in intensity until his room was as the noon day. A figure clothed from head to ankle in magnificent white stood in the air slightly away from his bedside. The apparition stated his name to be Moroni. The angelic figure explained that he was a leader in his day, and had lived as one of the ancient peoples of the Americas.

A lost tribe of the Jews had travelled from Jerusalem to America in around 600 B.C.E. The family consisted of the father (Lehi), mother (Sariah), three sons (Laman, Lemuel, and Nephi), and their wives and children. Lehi was well advanced in years when the journey commenced. The Americas were a sort of Promised Land that the family patriarch had been promised if he would heed God's instruction to leave Israel before the destruction to come. Shortly thereafter Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Indeed, the Mormons believe that America has been set aside as the place of the kingdom to come with the faithful being the new "peculiar people". They believe that these people are whom the Saviour is referring to when he speaks of having "sheep which are not of this fold". The LDS church believes that the three days that Jesus spent bodily in the tomb was the time when his spirit visited these ancient inhabitants of the Americas. The Mormons believe in going to a place of either spiritual paradise or spiritual prison upon one's death. There, souls await the return of Christ and the judgement. If a soul is held in bondage, it can only be released into the spiritual paradise if it accepts a baptism performed vicariously through a Mormon in good standing. These baptisms are performed in Mormon temples. It is believed that family members, especially descendants of those who were not taught Mormon truth in life, can be baptised by proxy for those on the other side. They cite the apostle Paul speaking of baptisms for the dead. However, like Christ, Paul was referring to those still alive, but spiritually dead. Christ stated, "Let the dead bury the dead." Of course this is impossible in the literal sense.

Of the three sons in the original family, the two oldest were of the rebellious character of Cain. The youngest, Nephi, was of the character of Abel or Seth. Nephi did not rebel and had a godly disposition. Obedient and diligent in following the laws of Moses, his descendants were known as the Nephites. They were at constant odds with the descendants of Laman and Lemuel (the Lamanites). Many wars were fought resulting in the eventual Nephite extermination. The angel Moroni

was the last living Nephite. As a captain and warrior, he was charged with hiding the genealogical record of his people to prevent its demise. He knew that when the gospel was restored in the latter days by a prophet, the existence of his people would be known to history. The Lamenites are considered to be the ancestors of the North, South, and Central American Indians. Like the Moabites they participated in sacrificing to other gods. It was not uncommon, according to Joseph Smith, for them to sacrifice their children.

The book of Mormon which Joseph Smith published in 1830 consists of 15 divisions or “books”. They are as follows: 1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Words of Mormon, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi, Mormon, Ether, and Moroni.

The book of Mormon itself is regarded by the LDS church as “Another Testament of Jesus Christ”. It claims consistency with the Bible.

Mary St. Onge (Hamilton Book Road)

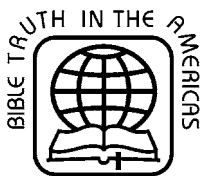
What We Can Learn from a Dog

- *Never pass up the opportunity to go for a ride.*
- *Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.*
- *When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.*
- *Take naps, and stretch before rising.*
- *Run, romp, and play daily.*
- *Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.*
- *Be loyal.*
- *Never pretend to be something you're not.*
- *If what you need lies buried, dig until you find it.*
- *When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by, and nuzzle her gently.*
- *Thrive on attention and let people touch you.*
- *Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.*
- *When you're happy, dance around, wag your entire body, and let everybody know.*
- *On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.*
- *Don't worry about things you can't control.*
- *No matter how often you're scolded, don't just lay around feeling bad and pouting; run right back and make friends.*
- *Delight in the simple joy of a long walk; study the birds and butterflies and bugs along the way.*

Adapted from various sources

“If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you; that is the principal difference between a dog and a man” (Mark Twain).

“My goal in life is to be as good a person as my dog already thinks I am” (Unknown).



Bible Mission News

News from Guadalajara October 2011



**Bro. Teodoro Horta, Bro. Victorino Martinez,
Bro. Ricardo Martinez**

The Guadalajara Ecclesia is very pleased to announce the baptism of Victorino Saul Ramirez Martinez on the 9th of October, 2011. Victorino came from a Catholic background and began studying with us in July of 2010. He is a quiet and very thoughtful, conscientious brother. He is willing to serve in any way he can. He lives quite far from the Bible Center but manages to attend almost all of our afternoon and evening Bible study classes during the week, and Sunday memorial service and Bible study. He is often accompanied by his

mother on Sundays and his children on Saturdays. His two teenage children will sometimes bring their cousins as well.

Currently we have four formal Bible studies a week at the Bible Center. The Bible Center is open Monday through Saturday 10 am to 6 pm with classes Wednesday 11 am, Thursday 7:30 pm, Saturday 4:30 pm, and Sunday 12:30 pm. We do the daily Bible readings Monday through Saturday at 3 pm and have some from the neighborhood who join us regularly. We also have many individual classes throughout the week, accommodating the times to the student. We have on average 25 to 30 contacts who attend Bible Study Classes throughout the month.

Since our Campaign in August we have been blessed with the help of Bre. Norm and Sylvia Duke from the San Diego Ecclesia for a week at the end of September and the beginning of October. Norm gave classes and exhortations which encouraged and strengthened the ecclesia, bonding with the brethren here. Sylvia's joyful attitude, great capabilities, and serving spirit helped in many many areas in the Bible Center. They were able to stay in the hall as the new hall has all the amenities to accommodate visitors well.

Sis. Sarah Cheetham from New Jersey arrived the 30th of October and has now been here a month. She arrived without knowing any Spanish and already is communicating very well. She has adapted well and seems to enjoy the experience

very much! She is finding that she has much to contribute here, and we hope she will be able to stay with us for some time as she easily connects with brethren and contacts alike.

As a whole the ecclesia is doing quite well. We have several who are diligently preparing for baptism with great joy over discovering the Truth. This of course keeps all of us very enthused.

May God continue to bless the ecclesia here in Guadalajara, and help us to grow and mature in His way. We welcome visitors with open arms and hearts. We know we are in the last days and the more we can get the word out the better, so please support the mission efforts in any way you are able. Live simply so others may live!

*Much love in our Masters Name, Your Sister by Grace,
Cynthia Paiva*



Sis. Sarah Cheetham and Sis. Cynthia Paiva

Positive Experience In Costa Rica

After arriving in San Jose, Costa Rica, about mid-afternoon on Wednesday, November 23rd, we were met at the ecclesial hall by about 25 sisters for a Bible Class on "Serving in the Ecclesia". They were extremely attentive to the instruction of the Word and co-operated fully by helping read the various portions of Scripture. After the study, they provided a lovely meal and we concluded the afternoon by singing hymns.

Thursday evening a special lecture was held, to which about six interested friends attended, as well as most ecclesial members and some relatives. The hall was fairly full and the evening was a real boost for this ecclesia of about 40 members.

On Friday evening members and CYC'ers gathered at the hall for their weekly activities of "Bible Readings" and discussion, held either at the hall or in homes. The senior CYC had planned a special activity on Saturday at Bro. Miguel and Sis. Maria Miranda's home, which is located up in the hills outside of Santa Barbara, with a spectacular view of part of the Central Plateau. Sister Marisol Vanegas organized a variety of games and craft activities for the young people. Their time together also included two studies on youth related matters — a united CYC as the place for friendships. They started arriving at 1:30 and left at eight in the evening — a very enjoyable activity for the 12 youths and about 10 adults too. It was very encouraging to see the healthy integration of all ages during the afternoon.

Sunday, however, was like a fraternal gathering with members from the two other cities of Grecia and Guadalupe in attendance. Normally they can only attend occasionally due to distance. Family and friends of members from the main ecclesia in Santa Barbara were also in attendance. With the extra attendance, the ecclesial

hall was quite full. The 9 am Remembrance Service was followed by a Bible Study which was held at the same time as the Sunday School. The exhortation theme was on the Daughters of Zelophehad and The Vineyard of the Lord formed the basis of the Bible study. Afterward the sisters provided a meal that consisted of typical Costa Rican cuisine and was very tasty.

During the five day visit we were invited to members' homes for fellowship. Our stay in Costa Rica was very positive and enjoyable. We helped support a full range of activities, organized in advance by the ecclesia.

Don and Miriam Luff, on behalf of the CBMA

Preaching in La Paz, Bolivia

Although there have been no baptisms in Bolivia for about a year, the witnessing to the Truth has continued weekly. Every Thursday evening about 12 to 15 people have been regularly attending a first principles class, which has been on-going for a couple of years. Several of these individuals are at the point where their consciences are putting them in a position of having to make a decision. Besides the weekly lectures, handbills are distributed, the correspondence work continues and reasonably priced billboards are now being used in this capital city. God willing, in 2012 a few special lectures will be held in another large city in Bolivia — Santa Cruz, which has a population of over 1,600,000. We were pleased to witness the various activities of the La Paz ecclesia in November for five days. Bro. Paul and Sis. Naomi Osborn (with their three children — Abigail, Isaiah and Joshua) have served as missionaries in Bolivia for about 18 months as of yearend (2011). Prior to this, they spent 14 months in Ecuador, supporting the ecclesia in Quito.

A special lecture was held on November 21st on the topic, "What is the Soul?" and 34 visitors attended! It was heartwarming to see visitors arriving 40 minutes early! The meeting room was so full that the front row of chairs was about three feet



Some of the members and friends at the La Paz special lecture.

from the podium! An ecclesial devotional study was held in the home of the Osborns on Saturday, November 19th, as well as the usual Remembrance Service and Sunday School on November 20th at the ecclesial hall. This was followed by a BBQ in the late afternoon at one of the member's homes. We enjoyed our time of fellowship with the

members at the ecclesial hall and in their homes around the Word, along with good conversation and food!

Submitted by Don and Miriam Luff, on behalf of the CBMA

Supporting a campaign in Campeche, Mexico

It all began with an advert in *The Way Ahead* magazine. Support a campaign in Campeche, Mexico? Why not? The adventure began in a crowded Thomson Airways flight to Cancún. Lots of English tourists looking forward to an idyllic break in a five-star hotel, being waited on hand and foot—and me with a backpack full of Bible stories and craft materials. A woman on a mission: the Christadelphian Bible Mission. Leaving the airport, searching desperately for a way of getting to the bus station, really brought home to me that my life was truly in God's hands. My phone didn't work and the only telephone number I had for my destination (Bro. Jorge and Sis. Damaris' house, seven hours away in Campeche) was dead. I had no choice but to trust in God, so I boarded the 18:00 coach to Campeche and sat tight for the next few hours. Relief swept over me when I eventually arrived and was welcomed by the anxious faces of two British people, Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson, and Mexican brother Jorge García.

An average day on the Campeche campaign consisted of distributing leaflets, preparing for the weekend talks, a quick fruit drink in the 'Italian Coffee House' and a progressive Matthew reading with interested Mexicans. The local people were very happy to receive the leaflets and a huge percentage of them professed a faith in God. My main role in the campaign was to entertain the children of the visitors we received at the talks at the weekends.

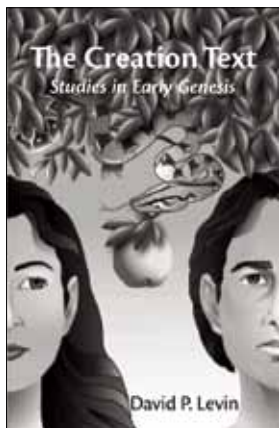
This was a challenging but very rewarding role, trying to present the Word of God in an engaging manner with limited Spanish. We were particularly blessed with the enthusiasm of a special lady named Josephine. She attended the Bible reading every day and all of the talks. We pray that she won't lose her eagerness to understand the Bible and spread the Good News.

The visit culminated with the arrival of hurricane Rina, which was due to hit Cancún five minutes after my flight was to depart. Once again I laid my life in the hands of God, who lavished his blessings on me. He delivered me safely to Cancún in the heart of the storm, provided me with food and shelter and kept me safe.

Incidentally, to help raise funds for my mission trip to Mexico I organised a fundraiser at my home. The evening was musical entertainment from talented friends and family, accompanied by Mexican refreshments for people to enjoy. I have always been very keen to mix my Christadelphian and non-Christadelphian friends in an effort to preach, so this was a great opportunity to invite everyone I knew to enjoy the last of the summer weather together in the back garden. The support I received was overwhelming and everyone had a great time. My thanks go to Bill and Carol, who are such an excellent example to us all, to Jorge and Damaris, who are wonderful people, but most importantly to God and his unfailing love.

Sis. Katie Routledge

NEW BOOKS FROM THE TIDINGS



*Soft Cover, 364 pages
\$12.00 US, plus shipping
and handling*

The Creation Text *Studies in Early Genesis*

by David P. Levin

The first five chapters of Genesis introduce life and death, forgiveness and mercy, judgment and justice.

The Creation Text examines their text and structure to offer fresh insights into fundamental questions. Are Genesis 1 and 2 two different creation accounts? Was the serpent given the power of speech to tempt Eve? Why was Cain's offering rejected?

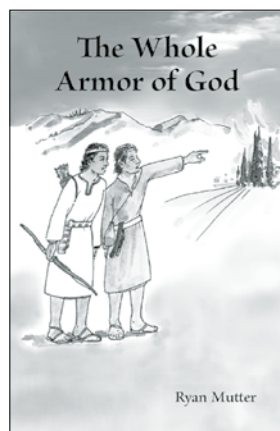
The 49 studies also explore Bible echoes, including: how the layout of the garden models the tabernacle; how Abel and Cain foreshadow Jesus and the Pharisees; and how Jesus' prayer in John 17 relates to Adam and Eve.

The Whole Armor of God

by Ryan Mutter

Malchiah is a young teenager in the reign of King Jotham. He faces challenges that test his resolve to stick to the principles of truth he has learned. Even though he is only a poor, young shepherd, the decisions he makes have consequences that impact his entire community. His choices matter.

This story takes place nearly three thousand years ago, but Malchiah's spiritual challenges are familiar to today's young people. His saga is an example of how practical guidance can come from the Word of God and how spiritual insight can be gained through the daily challenges of life.



*Soft Cover, 110 pages
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News & Notices

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

BOSTON, MA

We are pleased to announce the baptism of LORENZO GADSON on September 25, 2011, into the saving name of Jesus Christ. Bro. Lorenzo was introduced to the true gospel message by Bro. Richard Lee.

It is with sadness however, that we announce the passing in November 2011, of two of our beloved sisters in Christ. On November 10, 2011, Sis. Thelma Rundle fell asleep in Christ at age ninety five, and on November 19, 2011, our Sis. Irene Briggs passed away at age ninety three. Both of our sisters now rest peacefully awaiting the Lord's call to life again at his return.

We ask that you keep Tommy Coy in your prayers. He is the son of Bro. Matt and Sis. Kelley Coy. Tommy been suffering terribly from ulcerative colitis and has been in and out of the hospital repeatedly over the last several months.

We would like to thank our Bro. Mark Drake (Westerly, RI) for coming on September 18, 2011, and leading our Sunday school class as well as offering up the word of exhortation.

Jim Sullivan

BRANTFORD, ON

We are happy to extend a warm welcome to Bro. Joel Hynes by way of transfer from the St. Johns, NF Ecclesia as of November 13, 2011. We look forward to continued fellowship with him as we labour together in the truth. We enjoyed fellowship with our Bro. Roger Long (Grosvenor Road, UK), and thank him for leading our Thanksgiving fraternal weekend on the theme, "Built Together in Him," from Ephesians.

Since May of this year, ecclesias locally and further afield have enjoyed taking advantage of an exciting opportunity to let our light shine by way of a special Bible exhibit hosted in various venues including hotels, community centers, and a shopping mall. Our preaching support committee coordinated an event in Brantford utilizing this exhibit, blanketing the area with a multi-paged advertisement under the theme of, "400th Anniversary of the King James Bible: See the story. Feel the impact." Re-enforced with a follow up hand billing campaign and Bible seminar, a good deal of excitement was created. The exhibit was viewed by over 120 visitors in Brantford as well as in hundreds in other cities, some of which used excellent radio ads. In conjunction with the Brantford event, three special public presentations were given with a cumulative total of about 50 visitors. The local Brantford newspaper also wrote up the event providing further coverage for this witness! Thanks be to our heavenly Father for blessing this effort and the many hands that gladly contributed to the endeavour. As follow up, a one day seminar on, "Getting Started with the Bible" was hosted at the Paris Public Library and attended by five visitors who were thrilled with the guidance we could lend them as to how to read the Bible. We pray that this witness will bring honour to God's word which has the power to change hearts.

Please note that the undersigned is now Recording Brother, and can be contacted at dlbillington@gmail.com or 1-519-448-3419.

Daniel Billington

ECHO LAKE, NJ

Our Spring study weekend is to take place on March 10-11th, 2012, when we will have the company of Bro. Ron Kidd of the London Ontario Ecclesia. The theme of the weekend will be "As it was in the days of Noah".

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting Brethren and Sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester ,NY); Varghese Kurian (Trivandrum, India); Maria Bediako (Richmond, VA); Seon Levius Barbados, and Amrick Kilburn (Brooklyn, NY).

Stewart Marsden

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We are saddened to report the falling asleep in the Lord of our Sis. Jamesina Brimer in her ninetieth year. Sis. Jamesina was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ at age fourteen and was a lifetime member of the Hamilton Greenaway Ecclesia. She will be missed by all who knew her. She was a very active participant in all things ecclesial until the last several years when the infirmities of the flesh limited her activities. Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband Bro. Norman, and her children. She is at rest now until the Master comes to call her from the grave.

We are very pleased to welcome as members Bro. Jim and Sis. Eileen Scott, who have transferred from the Shelburne ON Ecclesia, and Bro. Alan and Sis. Nancy-Jean Markwith, who join us from the Hamilton Book Road, ON Ecclesia. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for all His tender mercies. is. Kimberly Anderson has transferred her membership to the Toronto North, ON Ecclesia and we commend her to the love and care of the brothers and sisters at Toronto North.

Tom Thorp

HONESDALE, PA

We were blessed by the visit of Bro. Bob and Sis. Bobby Faust, and Sis. Eloise Brower from the Moorestown Ecclesia, and by Denise Kowal and her daughter Rachel on November 20, 2011. Bro. Bob gave us a wonderful exhortation. The service was followed by a very tasty luncheon put on by our sisters. Five year old Rachel said afterwards "They have a restaurant in the cellar."

Stephen J. DeMarco

JASONVILLE, IN

With pleasure we report the baptism on October 1, 2011 of ANDREW S. MILLER. Our new brother is a welcome addition to our small ecclesia. May he be blessed in his walk to the kingdom.

We have been greatly assisted by visiting exhorters from the Avon, IN Ecclesia including Bre.: Lee Livermore, Dean Brown, Matt Livermore, Joe Evans, Tom Gadberry, Ed

NASHVILLE, TN

We rejoice in the baptism of CONNIE WATSON, the daughter of Sis. Rieta Watson, baptized in Rock Spring, Georgia. Sis. Connie lives with her mother in isolation. We wish our Sis. Connie God's blessing on her walk to the Kingdom. This is a picture of Connie's son Mike, Sis. Connie, her mother, Sis. Rieta, and her brother, Mark. Sis. Connie was baptized on December 2, 2011. Bro. James Dishman, Bro. Russ Herring, and Bro. Richie Sloan from Nashville, TN officiated at the service.



James Dishman

SARASOTA, FL

On behalf of the Sarasota, Largo and Orlando ecclesias, I would like to thank Bro. Phillip Prater of the Paris Avenue, OH Ecclesia for leading us in a very spiritually uplifting consideration of "The Seven Abominations," based on Proverbs 6, verses sixteen through nineteen.

The classes certainly provided a very powerful, yet hopeful, message of the guidance that Scripture, particularly the book of Proverbs, provides each of us as we await the Master's return. Bro. Prater's exhortation, "Tempted in All Points," brought home to us the fact that our Lord and Savior overcame those seven abominations, and left an example for each of us to follow.

James L. Wilkinson

TORONTO WEST, ON

We are very sorry to report the death of our beloved Sis. Barbara Fenner on September 14, 2011, after suffering with brain cancer. Sis. Barbara was baptized at the Hamilton MacNab, ON Ecclesia on May 10, 1974. During her faithful life, Barbara was actively and enthusiastically involved in all the affairs of the ecclesias to which she and her husband, Bro. Bob belonged. We will sorely miss the beautiful countenance of our sister who leaves behind her husband and their two daughters, Angela and Leanne and their families. In sadness we take comfort in knowing that Sis. Barbara lived in faith and died in hope of resurrection at the return of her Lord from heaven. We pray as did Barbara many times, "Even so come Lord Jesus."

We thank Bro. John King (Brighton, South Aust.) for his Bible class, and Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) for his exhortation of encouragement and lecture.

Rod Ghent

VICTORIA, BC

We rejoiced in the recent baptism of LEAH MCSTRAVICK on October 16, 2011. Sis. Leah is the daughter of Bro. Mike and Sis. Sandra McStravick and the granddaughter of Bro. Horace and Sis. Sylvia Macpherson.

We enjoyed the presence of Bro. David Lawrence from the Prince George, BC Ecclesia at our Fall Study Day held on November 12, 2011. His thoughts, from his interesting topic, "Turning Points," were well received. We were encouraged by recent attendance to our Bible Exhibition held at Sidney, BC. During the weekend, we counted well over 600 visitors. Fall 2011 proclamation activities have also included a Bible Seminar that was well attended with an active follow-up planned. We are continually blessed with many visitors. They are a constant reminder of the value of our larger fellowship in Christ.

Our Spring Study Weekend will be held on Saturday, March 24, 2012. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead the weekend with presentations on, "Lessons From The Sower". For further information please contact the undersigned at csnobelen@cssl.ca.

The Pacific Northwest CYC Easter Conference will be held on April 6-8, 2012. Activities will again be at Camp Pringle, Shownigan Lake, BC. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead the classes. For further information please contact Bro. Dave Higgs at daveandkess@gmail.com.

Clyde Snobelen

CORRECTIONS

In the November 2011 *Tidings* Magazine, the "Sanitizing the Heart" article was erroneously ascribed to Bro. Ken Camplin, of Australia. It was in fact written by Bro. Jim Sullivan, of the Boston, MA Ecclesia.

In the December 2011 *Tidings*, the exhortation "The Body of Christ — The Ecclesia" was attributed to Bro. Joe Hill, it should have been Bro. Paul Burkett of the Austin Leander, TX Ecclesia. My apologies to all for these errors.

Peter Hemingray

PIANO MUSIC CD AVAILABLE

The new multi-purpose CD called, "A New Beginning," is still available for purchase. Funds from the purchase of this CD are dedicated to Agape in Action and welfare funds for CBM, CBMA and CBMC. "A New Beginning" is a good way to for you to benefit other Christadelphians of all ages and also to build up your own spirituality. For more information please contact Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines by mail at: 97 Fourth Street, Sussex Corner, NB. Canada, E4E 5V9, (please note the change in postal code); by email at christad@nbnet.nb.ca; or by phone at 506-433-1728. Thank you for your help.

Cliff and Julia Baines

THANKS TO MARY BILELLO

Sharp eyed buyers of our books might have noticed that their communications are no longer with Sister Mary Bilello. This baton has now been passed on to others, but we cannot let this event pass without thanking Sister Mary for all her work over the last decade. Since the first book was published in December 2000 up to now, she has managed the book distribution activities of the *Tidings* Magazine, working quietly and selflessly on this often anonymous task. Many thanks in the Lord to you, Mary!

Peter Hemingray

"It ain't so much the things you don't know that get you in trouble. It's the things you know for sure that just ain't so!" (Mark Twain).

Minute Meditation

The way of life

Thinking back over a lifetime of experiences, a man once observed, “There are two mistakes one can make along the road to truth... not going all the way and not starting.” All of us are on a journey through life seeking the right way, the way of truth. Solomon asked God to make it clear to his people the good way in which they should go. Many folks don’t know where to begin and so they never start, but those who read the Bible know that there is a clear message about what is the right way to go for any who care to listen.

The way of life is a Biblical term. Jeremiah recorded, “And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.” Moses said to the children of Israel, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”

Since the road we choose is a matter of life and death, it is important that we make the right choice. Once we determine that the godly way is the right way, then we must start. And we must continue, to the end of our life. Too many folks delay making the decision, or let the distractions of life deter them from holding the course, and then lose out on the reward of eternal life that God has prepared for those who obey Him. It is a mistake not to start serving God, and it is a mistake not to dedicate our life to serving Him. We need to choose the way of life, and then start and never stop. As Ayn Rand advised, “All you have to do is look straight and see the road, and when you see it, don’t sit looking at it — walk.”

The phrase, “The way” is found 374 times in the Bible in the KJV version. The phrase isn’t used as often nowadays as it was in the past. It used to appear in the ecclesial news section of The Christadelphian Magazine in notifications such as, “Sister XYZ has fallen asleep. She had been in the way for over 60 years.” We understand the thought intended, but it sounds like she was blocking traffic for a very long time.

Solomon tells us, “There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Since the consequences of choosing the wrong way is death, it is extremely important to find the right way, choose it and stay in it.

How do we find that right way? When Jesus was comforting his followers he said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” He then told them, “and whither I go ye know and the way ye know.” The disciples were puzzled, so Thomas asked him, “Lord we know not whither thou goest: and how shall we know the way?” Jesus saith unto him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

So the right way, the only way of life, is to follow Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life. To be in the way then is to be a follower of Jesus, which is exactly

what Jesus tells us to do. He says, “my sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me.”

In another place Jesus says, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”.

Since following Jesus involves taking up our cross, it means that he does not promise us an easy way of life. He warns us, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Jesus wants us to cheer up because although we are going to have trouble, Jesus has overcome and we can too. Knowing this assurance causes Paul to exclaim, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Paul overcame and we can also.

As Paul traveled from ecclesia to ecclesia, he exhorted them to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Being in the way of life is important, it is a good start, but we must always remember to keep moving forward and never give up. Following Jesus is an active life, and there will be many obstacles on the road as we travel to the Kingdom, but we want to keep on the road all the way to the end of our life. Jesus tells us that only those who endure to the end will be saved.

If we truly follow the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul, then in the end we will also be able to say with Paul that we have “fought a good fight, we have finished our course, we have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give us at that day: and not to us only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JANUARY 2012

7 Thousand Oaks, CA. Day with the Word will be held at the Union Hall in Camarillo. Bro. Tim Osborn (Okanagan, BC) will lead us in a study of the “Jubilee”. Continental breakfast begins at 9:15 am with lunch provided. Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com.

28 San Diego County, CA, Annual Study Day, beginning at 9:30am. Bro. Bill Rawson (Exeter, UK) will be speaking on “Lessons from the Wilderness”. Lunch will be provided. Contact: Bro. Kent Ellis, 619 818-6701 or ellisk@san.rr.com.

FEBRUARY 2012

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

18-19 Calgary, AB Study day at Rolling Hills, Alberta. Bro. Stephen Bartholomew (Okanagan, BC) will give a study day starting at noon on Saturday through Sunday afternoon. The topic will be "Fathers and Sons". Space is limited. Please register to secure lodging, otherwise hotels are available nearby. Children's classes will be provided. Contact Bro. Dana Kohlman dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab.ca or Sis. Cherrilynn Kohlman 403-964-2562.

26-March 2 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Joni Mannell (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Valley, CA). The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH 2012

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

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

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

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

APRIL 2012

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

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

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

21-22 Sussex, NB, Spring study weekend. Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of Hosea.

21 The Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network's Annual Seminar "Faith Challenges: Caring Strategies for our Spiritual Life". Speaker: Bro Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Site: Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, Ontario.

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MAY 2012

26 Ottawa, ON Eastern Ontario Study Day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "What Really Happened in Eden?". Contact Sis. Ethel Archard elpis@sympatico.ca.

JULY 2012

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

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

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

AUGUST 2012

18-24 Winfield Bible School the Easter Seal Camp in Winfield. The Theme in 2012 will be: "That we may know him and the power of his resurrection". The Speakers will be: Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "The Temptations of Christ"; Bro. Steve Hornhardt (Aust.): "Come and See! Witnessing for Christ"; Bro. Tim Osborn (BC): "Blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus". Some of the accommodation available is air-conditioned, wheel-chair accessible, and includes supervised dorms for teens, private rooms for couples, families etc, plus electrical hook-ups for recreational vehicles.

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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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

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

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

Author unknown

Editorial

The Common Cup

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

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

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

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

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

Leavened Versus Unleavened Bread

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

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

The Cup

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

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

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

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

Infection and the Common Cup

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

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

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

Exhortation

Self-Sufficiency or God-Sufficiency?

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

The Messengers' Message

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

Do you know what these brethren were saying to us?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflections on a Religion of Rules

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Spirit of our Lord’s Religion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Tidings on Facebook

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

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel:

(4) The Physical Environment Adjusts to the Spiritual Environment

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

The Effects Related to Chaining Sin

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

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

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

The Introduction of Death

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

Guiltless Sin Offerings

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

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

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

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

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

The Blasphemy of Immortal Sin Capacity

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

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

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

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Tidings Committee

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

Joe Hill (Chairman, Tidings Committee)

Bible Study

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

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

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

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

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

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

A whole day to do nothing?

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

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

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

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

The contrast between creation and completion

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

What God did on the Sabbath

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

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

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

Jesus’ teaching on the Sabbath

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

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

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

The ultimate Sabbath

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

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

A Gift of Tears

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

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

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

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

George Booker

First Principles

The Atonement in Practice (4) Abraham and Lot

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON)

Notes:

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

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Using Bible Learning Centers



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

Q. What are Bible learning centers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. Do the children usually work alone?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Based on an interview with Patricia Hemingray and Esther Harper

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Reflections

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

What do we mean by “Love”?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Three aspects — all required

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next: *Committing to a relationship.*

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(To be continued.)

Mary St. Onge (Hamilton Book Road, ON)

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

Forgiveness (1)

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

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

Why are we writing about forgiveness?

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

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

The character of God

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

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

The LORD responds:

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

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

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

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

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

Moses' response is based on Exodus 34:

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

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

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

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

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

The Sons of Korah follow the same pattern:

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

As do the Songs of Degrees:

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

The Law of Moses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Solomon's dedication prayer

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

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

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

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

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

8:39; 2Chr 6:30).

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

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

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

Next: “Forgiveness” Terminology and Definitions

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

Notes:

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

Forgiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Gender Roles from the Beginning

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

Why do we do it that way?

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

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

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

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

Bible history versus human history

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One, but not the same

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first man and woman

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

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

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

Letters

Dear Editor:

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

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

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

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

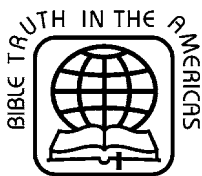
Reply:

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

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

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

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



Bible Mission News

La Paz, Bolivia Have You Tried This?



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

Malaysian Bible School

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

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

Kahfook Tham, ACBM New Zealand

Experiences in Mexico, September-November 2011

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Bill and Carol Rawson



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

San Salvador, El Salvador

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



Bro. Carlos Santana

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The brothers and sister of El Salvador

News & Notices

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

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

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

Tom Thorp

LONDON, ON

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

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

Dave Birchall

MISSISSAUGA WEST, ON

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

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

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

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

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

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

Graham Baldock

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

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

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

Art Bull

PARIS AVENUE, OH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jack Vogelgesang

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

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

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

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

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

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

Nick Parrino

WICHITA FALLS, TX

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

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

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

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

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

John A. Clubb

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION — NORTH AMERICA

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

Dave and Jen Waye

Minute Meditation

What is it that God cannot do?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Robert J. Lloyd

Special Invitation

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

You, your family and friends are invited to the

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

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

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

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

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

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

FEBRUARY 2012

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

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

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

MARCH 2012

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

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

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

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

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

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

APRIL 2012

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

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

7-8 New Westminster, BC Fraternal Gathering. Theme: "The Empty Chair — 2 Corinthians". Bro. Horace ("Mac") MacPherson (Victoria, BC) is to lead the sessions.

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

21-22 Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study day at Washington Christadelphian Ecclesia, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD. Speaker Bro. Nigel Small (Echo Lake, NJ): "Joseph — Saviour of the World". Study day, Sat. begins at 1pm. Gathering, Sun. begins at 10:30am. Contact Bro. Bob Kling 301-498-5245 or rkling@acm.org.

21-22 Sussex, NB, Spring study weekend. Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of Hosea.

21 The Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network's Annual Seminar "Faith Challenges: Caring Strategies for our Spiritual Life". Speaker: Bro Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Site: Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, Ontario.

MAY 2012

11-13 Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend, endorsed by the Nanaimo Ecclesia. The location is Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, B.C. on Vancouver Island. The study leader is Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): "You Faithful Women of the Last Days". (Non refundable deposit required by April 1, 2012.) Further details contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8, or email yvonne2001@shaw.ca.

26 Ottawa, ON Eastern Ontario Study Day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "Early Genesis: the Forest, the Trees, the Weeds, the Deeds". Contact Sis. Ethel Archard elpis@sympatico.ca.

JUNE 2012

24-30 California Christadelphian Kids Camp. Children 9-16. Teachers are Bro. Jim Cowie (AUS) and Bro. Dev Ramcharan (CA). Our theme is "Elisha". Cost is \$125 before Feb. 29, and \$150 afterwards. Register at www.kidscampcalifornia.com. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com.

30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. Theme "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23). Youth theme "I will Praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "The Lord Raised up Judges" (adults) and "Paul's Powerful Preaching" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord" (adults) and "What would you do?" (teens); Br. Carl Parry (Salisbury Adelaide, South Australia): "Epistle to James – Be Ye Doers of the Word" (adults) and "How judge ye? – Case studies based on Law of Moses" (teens). Information on website www.christadelphians.net/MACBS.

JULY 2012

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AUGUST 2012

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

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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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The Truth of the Bible

Christian humility requires us to refrain from equating our interpretations with the inspired Bible... If, shortly after Paul's letters had been written, it was possible for them to seem "hard to be understood" in some places (2Pet 3:16), why need we feel ashamed to admit that we too have difficulties in these and other books? The profession of knowing all the answers is usually a very human kind of pride, and it can be maintained only by parading much human misinterpretation as divine wisdom.

Is the Bible true? Of course it is, but only in the sense that God intended it to be true. And since "truth" is no simple, self-explanatory quality, misunderstandings can easily arise from misinterpretation of Scripture.

Certain people have no sense of security unless they are able to have an infallible answer to every question. This is basically an attitude of the teens, while mature adults are able to acknowledge that not every question can be answered, and still to face life calmly.

Wilfred Lambert

Editorial

The Holy Kiss

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings” (Rom 16:16).

“Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ” (1Pet 5:14).

Introduction

Paul closes four of his epistles (Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and 1st Thesalonians) with the same phrase *“Greet one another with an holy kiss”*. (Quite why Romans in the KJV has “salute” instead of “greet” I do not know: the Greek is the same.) And Peter closes his first epistle with a similar phrase, as noted above. So five times we are directed how to greet one another, but in a way that is somewhat rare, although not unknown, in our midst. So how are we to treat this injunction of Paul? As a reflection of an Eastern custom that has no equivalent in our day? As a command that ought to be followed: and if so, how and when?

Background

The Greek for “kiss” here is “philema,” derived from “phileo”, which is one of the two Greek words translated by love in the NT. The word “love” in 1st Peter is the other word: “agape” in the Greek. In the Septuagint, the Old Testament used by the recipients of Paul’s letters, the same Greek word is again commonly used for kiss. In the Bible, a kiss is commonly bestowed:

- On children by close relatives, and vice versa
- On spouses and others with an erotic or sexual implication
- As a sign of friendship between males
- As a sign of respect

So, as is the custom in the English speaking world, the only time adults of the opposite sex exchanges kisses in the OT was with some sort of sexual context. Although males exchange kisses, it is between relatives, close friends, or servant-master.

It is interesting that in the Greek Old Testament, the word for “kiss” is the Greek word phileo, or based upon it. This is true whether or not the kiss has a sexual connotation, for example in *“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine”* (Song 1:2). This use of phileo is perhaps somewhat similar to that of the English word “love.” The meaning of this word depends greatly on the context: the love of a man for his wife differs greatly from the love of a dog for his owner, or, to use a somewhat profane example, the love of a sports fan for his team. It all depends on the context. A kiss in the Old Testament can be overtly sexual: or it can be a symbol of asexual friendship or respect.

The Holy Kiss as a commandment

Is the use of the “Holy Kiss” a direct commandment, in the same way we regard baptism and the memorial service? A few denominations do so regard it, but for most it has become classified along with fasting and foot washing, as a custom which is commanded to be treated as and when appropriate in our times. Feet washing, in a dusty country with a sandal the normal footwear, was as one of the most menial of all the offices that one person could perform towards another. As such it was selected by the Lord in illustration of that lesson of entire humility which he sought to teach his disciples. And fasting was never a direct commandment: its applicability to ourselves has been considered before.¹ In common with many such New Testament proscriptions, the “Holy Kiss” is a symbology we should regard, should observe, but its mode of observance will conform to the social environment in which we live.

The Holy Kiss

When Paul exhorted the members of the infant church to greet one another with a holy kiss his emphasis was upon the “holy”. Kissing was, in his day, the customary form of greeting between members of the same sex, and he commended it to the Christian community as the symbol of “brotherly” love. In most of the English speaking Christadelphian communities, a handshake at least used to be the usual greeting and it can, for the community of Christ, carry with it the warmth of brotherliness or sisterliness. There is no Scriptural reason why, if they prefer it, the sisters should not observe the same custom as the brethren, though it may be felt by some that a kiss is more sisterly.

Among especially the young, the hug has replaced any other form of salutation, and it is nice to see the young exchanging such greetings quite commonly, both female to female and, among those of close acquaintance, between both sexes. I have been the recipient of such welcoming hugs: of which more anon.

If you travel to France, you can perhaps see what is perhaps intended by the custom of the holy kiss, as acquaintances, close or not so close, exchange air kisses. (Although I could never work out how many kisses, and which side to start.)

It is of note that in the early church this “Holy Kiss” was exchanged after the memorial service, and the kiss was actually on the lips — but strictly brother to brother, sister to sister. Whether this is true in the times of Paul we cannot be certain, but there was great care taken to strip the gesture of any possible misunderstanding.

The symbol of the Holy Kiss is crucial to remember: it is most important that we are aware of this physical closeness in our hearts. There is a great danger that we formally greet our brethren and sisters without being truly concerned about their welfare. For example, we may greet them, ask them how they are, and then move off before they have answered us. We should be concerned about both their natural and their spiritual welfare. We should be aware, by becoming physically close, that we grow in spiritual closeness also, and this is the main point of the rite.

Present day application

The principle of the “Holy Kiss” is very clear: all are to extend a warm greeting to each other. The form of greeting might (and often should) be different between the sexes, among the young versus the old, and in different cultures around the world. The exuberance of the Caribbean is different from in the Northeast of America, which again differs from California. Some might exchange a warm hand-shake, some might exchange a hug, and some might exchange some form of kiss, whether a European air-kiss or a kiss on the cheek. But the effect is the same: some sort of physical contact gives a stronger sense of bonding, of true spiritual friendship, than a verbal exchange can. Fellowship is not merely the common sharing of the emblems, but it is a striving together in the common sense of unity, of community, of the sharing in the bonds of Christ. *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Heb 10:25). Assembling is not just a random assembly of disconnected individuals, but a vital part of the body of Christ. It is not homogeneous by any means, but it should be interconnected. As Paul says *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”* (1Cor 12:12). The “body” is an interconnected whole, and the connections should not consist of merely inhabiting the same space, but of connections on a far deeper spiritual plane. This is strengthened by what is represented by the “Holy Kiss.” Any sort of physical touch greatly strengthens the connections.

There is however one aspect of the physical contact that should be mentioned, unfortunately. There have been quite a number of occasions in which the commandment for the “Holy Kiss” has been used in ways that, perhaps unintentionally, have given rise to a great deal of discomfort. Often it is young sisters being welcomed too warmly by certain brothers — so much so as to make avoidance the response. It is no accident that the early church confined the practice to between members of the same sex. In general, brothers should be prepared to accept some sort of contact from sisters, but not to offer it. Only if the contact is very clearly welcomed should it be repeated. In our present society, sexual harassment is a significant problem. No brother, however well respected (and it is often such brethren who are involved) should behave in such a way as to give rise to the least suspicion of any action that might cause discomfort. Appropriate contact strengthens the bonds of fellowship. Inappropriate contact does the opposite.

The “Holy Kiss” is intended to strengthen the bonds between fellow believers, and should never be used in such a way as to cause any suspicion or occasion for discomfort.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. See, for example, “He was Hungry” in *The Tidings*, July 2010, p293.

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Exhortation

Entering the Kingdom

The apostle Paul equated paradise to the “third heaven” and the Lord Jesus made it even plainer that paradise is identical to the kingdom when he promised the repentant thief, in answer to the latter’s request “*Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*”, that he should be in paradise.

How, then can we enter into the kingdom? Jesus made three “except” statements in this regard, and we will find the necessary requirements when we examine each of these.

First, to Nicodemus, “*Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he **cannot** enter the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). This is the basic or fundamental requirement. Sadly, by the close of the gospel narrative, Nicodemus had not responded, although we find him in at least two encouraging episodes. “*Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him and know what he doeth?*” (John 7:51). After the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus...there came also Nicodemus (John 19:38-39). It would have been the ideal place to mention if Nicodemus had been a disciple! Do we not know people who have a high regard and sympathy for the cause of Christ, and yet hesitate to make the ultimate commitment? There can be no replacement for the command, “*Except a man be born of water and of the spirit*”. What may have hindered Nicodemus, “*a man of the Pharisees, a **ruler** of the Jews*”? (John 3:1). Apparently he had gone up the social ladder, from a “man” to a “ruler”. Was Pharisaic pride the stumbling block?

Second, Jesus taught his disciples, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the Kingdom*” (Matt 5:20). Two factors are indicated by this requirement: disciples must have a **degree** of righteousness, and this quality must not be a justification of self. Jesus on another occasion upbraided the Pharisees, “*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men*” (Luke 16:15). Ezekiel wrote of three notable men, Noah, Daniel and Job, “*who shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness*” (Ezek 14:14, 20). Peter highlights Noah, a preacher of righteousness (2Pet 2:5), and adds Lot to the list (v. 8). Daniel is described thus: “*he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him*” (Dan 6:4). “*Job ... [was] a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*” (Job 1:8). Where do we stand against this backdrop? At our baptism, we “fulfilled all righteousness”, but have we been able to maintain a clean slate or have we developed, unwittingly, self-righteousness? Rom 6:13, 16, 18, 19, 20 should be of tremendous help in this post-baptismal process. How Judah must have been embarrassed by the undeniable evidence of his sin against his daughter-in-law! “And Judah acknowledged them, and said, “*She hath been more righteous than I*” (Genesis 38:26).

Finally Jesus told his disciples, “*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom*” (Matt 18:3) at a time when they were

debating who is the greatest in the Kingdom! So, the emphasis here is **HUMILITY**: “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom.” (v 4). Little children do not bear grudges, and they operate on the basis of deep friendship being necessary in a communal setting. Is this how we behave? Many otherwise good kings lacked humility: “their hearts being lifted up” is a sad commentary of their downfall. But Jesus “*humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil 2:8).

At the cross, many one-way statements were made, such as “*he saved others, himself he cannot save!*” (Matt 27:42). But there was one significant dialogue, between a man who was dying for his own sins, “*and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*” (Luke 23:41) and one who was dying for the sins of others.

“*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*” And the response: “*Thou shalt be with me in paradise*” (Luke 23:42-43).

On what basis is the thief granted a place in the kingdom? Was he “*born of water and of the spirit*”? Did his “*righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees*”? Can it be said that he was “*converted and became as a little child*”? The whole country had come to John’s baptism (Luke 3:7, 10, 12, 14). Why not this man who knew Jesus and the certainty of the coming kingdom (“*Lord, come into thy Kingdom*”) ? Unlike most of the Pharisees who could not recognize Jesus of Nazareth, this man acknowledged that Jesus “*had done nothing amiss*”. What better example of “conversion” than when we can say we deserve death because of our sin and ask for forgiveness — “*Lord, remember me...*”

Clive Dreppaul (Brooklyn, NY)

*We can't afford to win the gain that means another's loss;
We can't afford to miss the crown by stumbling at the cross.
We can't afford the heedless jest that robs us of a friend;
We can't afford the race that comes to tragic bitter end.*

*We can't afford to play with fire, or tempt a serpent's bite;
We can't afford to think that sin brings any true delight.
We can't afford with serious heed to treat the cynic's sneer,
We can't afford to wise men's words to turn a careless ear.*

*We can't afford for hate to give like hatred in return;
We can't afford to feed a flame and make it fiercer burn.
We can't afford to lose the soul for this world's fleeting breath;
We can't afford to barter life in mad exchange for death.*

*How blind are we apart from Thee, our great all-seeing LORD;
Oh, grant us light that we may know the things we can't afford.*

Anonymous

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel:

(5) The Early and Latter Rains of God's Word

Our Creator's obvious communication policy is one of intentional complexity. Images, visions, parables, dreams, complex rituals, allegorical miracles, four headed winged cherubim, a dragon with seven heads as well as a tail that sweeps one third of the universe's stars to our tiny planet, and seven thin cows devouring seven fat cows all serve to validate this extremely obvious divine communication policy. Our Creator hides Himself. He veils His thoughts. If we want to find our Creator we have to pursue Him through a mental obstacle course offering a distinct disadvantage to our naturally self-worshipping hearts. A circumcised heart is the only defense against the default, instinctive error of oversimplification that diverts our attention from divine glory to personal glory. Oversimplification of divine expressions is the foundational platform for all forms of apostasy.

Divinely insulting doctrinal errors

Jesus obediently maintained the educational policy of his Father, teaching the crowds exclusively through parables that he would explain to his disciples only privately. Jesus explains the divine policy of intentional complexity to his disciples. He explains that this educational procedure gives to those who have, and takes away from those who have not (Matt 13:10-15). The non-stop symbolism and layered, inter-related divine expressions of Scripture all have to be interpreted. The uncircumcised human heart will always interpret everything in a self-glorifying manner. This is why literally every form of false doctrine improperly exalts the flesh and degrades the Creator. Without exception, false doctrine is always divinely insulting. In order to witness a greater measure of the currently veiled glory of our Creator that will eventually saturate creation we need to respect that intentional complexity. Every issue has to fit together perfectly, symmetrically and interdependently with every other issue. We have to remember the rule of God manifestation: everything affects everything else because it is all interconnected.

Respecting this intentional complexity vaccinates us from the degrading nature of underestimating divine communications. There is always more to see and understand. The infinite mind of our Creator cannot be fully plumbed by the pitiful, finite minds of men. The first step in witnessing the divine glory in the things that have been made is recognizing we are nowhere near as smart as we think we are. We miss far more than we ever figure out.

Pondering the rain

What do we think when we look at the rain falling from the clouds of heaven? A linear thought process might prompt a response to avoid getting wet. A wider range of thought might include the effects on groundwater tables, the forest fire index, the value to our gardens, soil erosion, a greener lawn, slippery driving conditions,

possible flooding or simply the distressing cuteness of a smiling, muddy child. Perhaps we wonder about how that rain got up into the heavens to form the clouds, the accelerating temperature variance due to the rain and other meteorological considerations. All of these interconnections with the feature of rain have their basis in how divine truths and eternal principles are being subtly but powerfully projected by our Creator to for those who share His vision for creation.

The perfectly seamless application of the wide variety of creational metaphors spanning the more than millennium and a half development of the Bible is an unchallengeable validation of divine authorship. These consistent creational metaphors are multi-layered and interdependent, as we will see with the lesson of the rain. The subtlety of this underground river of thought is intended to veil its divine glory from all but those who have, while those who have not will suffer even greater blissful ignorance.

The water of the Word

The initial spiritual identification of rain is quite simple, as is the case with the dominant foundational creation metaphors saturating Scripture (clouds, air, dirt, rocks, mountains, heaven and earth, light, darkness, fire, ashes, blood, etc). Rain is a form of water, just as clouds, steam, snow, ice, rivers, oceans and lakes are forms of water. All of these creational variations of water share the same basic foundational spiritual identification with the Word of God, but with somewhat different spiritual applications corresponding to their creational distinctions. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph 5:25-27). We see that ‘rain’ has this same ‘word of God’ identification. *“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass”* (Deut 32:1-2). *“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it* (Isa 55:10-11).

The clouds, rain, rivers and seas of the Word

The identification of water as the spiritual projection of the Word of our Creator opens the door to an endless consideration of the extended parallels between the written Word of God (Bible) and the spoken Word of God (creation). We can pursue the source of the rain being the clouds of our Creator’s presence power and glory that shielded Israel from Pharaoh’s murderous cavalry at the edge of the Red Sea; led Israel in the wilderness; filled the wilderness tabernacle at its dedication and filled Solomon’s temple at its dedication; overshadowed Christ on the transfiguration mount and serves as the frame for the earthly exit and the triumphant return of Christ (coming with power and glory in the clouds of

heaven). We can pursue the application of the rivers and seas replenished by the pouring out of the rain that Scripturally represents the judgments of the word of God being both life and death. This is demonstrated in the flood waters that both destroyed the wicked and saved the righteous (1Pet 3:20); as well as the two seas in Israel projecting the opposing images of life and death, which are connected by the Jordan River. This illustrated the progression from life to death that reversed when the feet of the priests bearing the Ark stepped into those waters; and of course the baptismal waters that project the image of both death to the flesh and life to the spirit. We could also examine the relationship between the rain/word that germinates, nurtures and develops the earth's fruit bearing plantlife, and that Scripturally projects the enlightened who are expected to bear fruit to the divine Husbandman. There are many multi-layered avenues of consideration that are all interconnected both creationally and spiritually. Let's isolate just one of the many possible avenues to demonstrate the parallel layering of this spiritual/physical bond. This is the law of the early and the latter rains.

We will have to wait for the next commentary to begin to see the how the law of the early and latter rains weaves through divine policy, geographical design and specifically prophecy. We are currently living at the end of the period between the early and latter rains, anticipating the latter rains of the pouring out of God's Word from the heavens in its three applications: the spoken Word, the Word made flesh, and the Word in power.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

A Different Type of Prayer

Heavenly Father, help us remember that the person who cut us off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and was rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry, and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young man who can't make change correctly is a worried 19-year-old college student, balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester.

Remind us that the scary-looking person, begging for money in the same spot every day (who really ought to "get a job"), is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slow through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last year that they go shopping together.

Heavenly Father, help us to be slow to judge and quick to forgive.

Anonymous

Bible Study

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis: (4) Confession

In Gen 3:11, God asks Adam, “*Did you eat of the tree that I commanded you not to eat of?*” If Adam confesses, God has a basis upon which to extend his forgiveness and mercy, and thus spare Adam’s life. If Adam fails to take responsibility for his misdeed, God will enforce the prescribed death sentence. The question gives Adam an opportunity for life and by itself is an act of mercy, showing how God invites confession.

The conventional view

Both Adam and Eve mention another party in their responses. The common view is that Adam and Eve evade responsibility for their sin: Adam blames Eve, and indirectly God; Eve straightforwardly blames the serpent. This reading, however, has many difficulties. Even authors who allow for some attempt at a confession believe that Adam and Eve temper their confessions with extenuating circumstances, and that they try to show that they are not fully responsible.

Below are some typical interpretations of this passage. This list could be twice as long, all stating the same general position:

“If,” he says, “Thou hadst not joined this woman to me, I would not have eaten.” Thus he again traces the sin he himself had committed back to God and accuses God of his own sin... In short, Adam does not want to acknowledge his sin; he wants to be regarded as pure and innocent.”¹

Adam sought to lay whatever blame he could on others. Whilst he did not deny that he had done wrong, he tried to convince the angel that it was not altogether his fault... Adam sought to shift some portion of blame on to both the woman and the God-given responsibility. Thus, he attempted a measure of self-justification.²

The man endeavors to lessen the gravity of his offence by emphasizing in the preface to his confession that it was not on his own, but on the woman’s, initiative that he committed the wrong... Possibly there is also to be noted an attempt on Adam’s part to exculpate himself by alluding to the fact that it was the LORD God Himself who *gave* the woman to be with him, as though to say: *Thou didst give* the woman to be with me, and *she gave* me of the fruit of the tree. This, too, is characteristically human: people are inclined to justify their conduct by pointing to the circumstances and fate that God has allotted to them in life.³

The repeated verb [gave] nicely catches the way the first man passes the buck, not only blaming the woman for giving him the fruit, but virtually blaming God for giving him the woman. She in turn of course blames the serpent.⁴

The garden of delight has become the garden of dread, and their newly found fear initiates a tragic sequence of blame. The woman is excoriated by the man for offering the fruit. The woman, in turn, blames the snake for deceiving her.⁵

The lame reply that he does make causes us to blush for him... It is a reply that in cowardly fashion refuses to admit plain guilt and in an entirely loveless fashion lays the blame for it all first on his wife and then by a wicked charge upon God himself. Evasion characterizes also the woman's attitude . . . She knows what she did was done of her own volition, yet she charges the serpent with it exclusively . . . by laying the blame upon the serpent she indirectly also charges the Creator for having let the creature cross her path.⁶

These writers accuse Adam and Eve of blame-shifting, cowardice, false accusation, self-justification, and unloving behavior. Their calumny against Adam and Eve is completely misplaced.

Adam's confession

By invoking other parties into their statements of confession, Adam and Eve are not shifting blame, but citing important elements detailing their personal failures. They give full and specific confessions. There is not a breath of an attempt to exonerate themselves by assigning any responsibility to God, woman, or serpent. Four lines of evidence support this reading:

1. Take the text as it is.

- Adam's reply to God's question comprised four truths:
- The woman
- you gave to be with me
- she gave me of the fruit
- and I did eat.

There was a woman, God gave the woman to Adam, the woman gave Adam the fruit, and Adam ate. That's exactly how the crime occurred. The plain reading of the text tells us that Adam tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. There are no verbal emphases in the text ("the *woman*, whom *you* gave me"), such as expressed by Cassuto (footnote above) and implied by just about everyone else. Neither can you assume that mentioning others amounts to shifting blame. The text, as it is, is a straightforward confession of the facts.

2. Would God have forgiven them if they had tried to shift the blame?

When you confess your sins to God, do you blame others or cite extenuating circumstances? Do you say, "Yes, I got angry, but only because . . ." Of course you wouldn't allow that for yourself, and if you were God you know you wouldn't accept such excuses. We are supposed to rise above the temptations around us, period. James 1:13-15 is explicit here. Let no one blame circumstances, or the God who created or allowed those circumstances.

A confession that says the sinner fell victim to circumstances is only an acknowledgement that the person failed to overcome those circumstances. This is so fundamental to our Christian walk that it is inconceivable that in this primary instance of sin God would accept a plea for forgiveness grounded on extenuating circumstances.

3. Testimony of 1John 1:8-10

These three verses sandwich confession between two denials of sin. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* (v. 9 NIV). Contrasted with this are the claims of being without sin (v. 8) and not having sinned (v. 10). This says that if we fail to acknowledge our sins, or fail to acknowledge our sinful being, the truth is not in us and we make God out to be liar. We have no forgiveness if we fail to acknowledge our sinful condition.

God will not forgive them unless they come forward with a pure confession. The case is made yet stronger because while writing a general truth, John is also writing specifically with Adam and Eve and Cain in mind. Cain is cited explicitly in 3:12, and the letter abounds with references and allusions to early Genesis. Cain, as you remember, denied his murderous deed when God asked him about his brother’s whereabouts. John is saying Adam and Eve confessed and had their sins taken away. Cain didn’t confess, so he was exiled in an unforgiven state. John draws this contrast, virtually interpreting for us what Adam and Eve said.

4. Jesus’ prayer for his disciples

The prayer recorded in John 17 is well known, but its background might not be so well known. Jesus quotes from Genesis 2 and 3 at least a half-dozen times in his prayer, and positions his farewell message in the perspective of his role as the Second Adam.

The key phrase is the repeated “you gave me” or “you have given me” (vv. 2, 6, 6, 9, 24) that the Lord Jesus uses to describe his relationship to his disciples. He is not just alluding to, but quoting Genesis 3:12, the First Adam’s statement of his relationship to the first Eve, “the woman you gave me.” Just as Adam acknowledged God had given him Eve, so Jesus acknowledges that God gave him the disciples. In the context of John’s writings, from the beginning saturated with references to early Genesis, these “givens” lead our thinking back to the First Adam.

Jesus’ service on behalf of the disciples contrasts with Adam’s service on behalf of Eve. Extending the principle set out by Paul in Rom 5:14-21 and 1Cor 15:45-47, the Second Adam accomplished something that the First Adam didn’t. The table below lists the specifics of his ministry that Jesus cites in this prayer, and contrasts them with what Adam apparently failed to do in his stewardship.

JESUS John 17	ADAM Genesis
Manifested God's name to the disciples.	Eve did not use God's name (YHWH) in discourse with the serpent.
They have kept your word.	Eve made mistakes when quoting God's word.
Gave them the words God gave him.	Adam would have had to teach Eve God's word.
Kept them in your name and guarded them.	Keep and guard the garden.
Prayed for them.	No mention of this.
Keep them from the evil one.	Eve deceived by the serpent.

These references, plus others,⁷ to Genesis 2 and 3 leave no doubt that the Lord Jesus is telling the disciples that he has fulfilled the mission his Father set before him. By implication, Adam failed in these very points. He did not manifest God's name to Eve, for she did not use it when speaking with the serpent. John 17:12 quotes the two verbs of Adam's charge, to keep and guard the garden. Jesus did this; Adam did not. Eve did not know God's word well. Adam was not beside Eve when she needed him most, and when he came beside her, he partook of her sin as well.

Just as John 17 is a categorical statement of Jesus' victory, Gen 3:12 is Adam's catalogue of confession. The First Adam ruefully discloses how he failed in his service; the Second Adam reminds the Second Eve, the disciples, that he has fulfilled his mission to them. Adam's statement, brief as it is in keeping with the sparseness of early Genesis, is an ideal confession. He not only admits the fact of his transgression, but outlines the manner in which the transgression came to pass. He's not blaming Eve or God at all; quite the opposite, he's acknowledging his failure to them in fulfilling the special relationship that God provided.

Eve's Confession

After Adam's contrition, God turns to Eve. He questions Eve indirectly, asking her an open-ended question, not a sharp yes-no question as He had asked Adam about his eating. Instead of asking her if she had eaten, He asks, "What have you done?" This opens the way for her to slide away, for He doesn't pin her down. In view of her legalistic approach to the serpent's guile we might expect God to ask something like, "Did you take of the fruit of the tree and eat it?" God is on a different track and is not going to work on that issue with her.

The open-ended question is a test of her relationship to God and her husband. Here is where the blame-shifting hypothesis capsizes and sinks completely. If she wanted to go for the blame, she would have immediately fingered Adam, not the

serpent. It was Adam's failure to adequately teach her what God spoke to him that led to her sin, or so she could have made it out to be. She could have easily, and quite truthfully said, "If Adam had kept the serpent out of the garden, and if he had been there with me, and if he had taught me better what God had told him, I would not have eaten." All that would have been true.

God gave Eve the opportunity to blame Adam, and she didn't take it. She resolutely stood by her own failure, and admitted that she was no match for the serpent. Eve admits the stark truth: her own inability to filter out deception. "It's my fault, not his." What an absolute heroine, this fine woman.

In admitting that the serpent deceived her, she is simply admitting what we know anyway, that the human heart is deceitful above all things and is not to be trusted. The simple acknowledgement of the serpent's besting her lays open her contrition and awareness that in her vain attempt to become like God, she was utterly deceived. Deception, thy name is serpent.

Adam and Eve confess their sins, and much more. They protect each other, they stand up for each other, and trust in the mercy of their heavenly father. God, moved to compassion by their contrition, humility, and nobleness of character, forgives their sins. They live; they do not die then and there. Their answers to God, standing naked before him, put right on the spot, reveal that although they are flesh and blood humans, they know how to act when they fail.

With the defendants' pleas of guilt in hand, the judge pardons them. There will be no immediate punishment, for that would mean immediate death. There will, however, be a different world for Adam and Eve.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, Genesis 1-5. (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; St. Louis: Concordia 1958), p. 177.
2. H. P. Mansfield, *Christadelphian Expositor*, vol. 1. (West Beach, South Australia: Logos Publications, no date), pp. 75-76.
3. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. Translated by Israel Abraham. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), p. 157 (italics his).
4. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 13.
5. William P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 148-149.
6. H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*. (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1942), pp. 158, 160.
7. Other examples: granted authority (dominion), v. 2.; life/knowledge, v. 3. (cp. trees of life/knowledge of good and evil); completed the work (ct. Adam and Eve expelled from garden, worked outside); they may be one, vv. 11, 23 (cp. Gen 2:24).

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

Notice: The First Principles series of Articles on the Atonement by our Bro. Richard Morgan has been temporarily suspended because of his current incapacitation. They will resume in the next issue, God willing.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

How Two Ecclesias Have Used Sunday School Resource Centers

The following reports are reprints of two short articles published several years ago in *The Joy of Sunday Schooling Journal*.¹ The reports tell how two ecclesias set up and used resource centers in their Sunday schools. The purposes served by Sunday school resource centers are as important today as they were then, even if the nature of some educational resources has changed. Notice the different ways the two ecclesias used their Sunday school resource centers.

Report 1

Our ecclesia has quite an extensive resource-library center. Perhaps a few ideas of what we have done may be helpful.

We have a lending library of about 300 books and tapes for children. The library is located in one of the Sunday school rooms. Each book and tape has a pocket and card, and the children sign their name each time they take something. They are allowed to take two things at a time: a book and tape/book or two books or two tape/books. There is a box for the signed cards to go in. There is a container for returned books. There is a box in which the librarian puts the signed cards in alphabetical order.

The books are arranged on the shelves according to level: primary and junior. The primary book shelf is organized by: (1) creation-nature books, (2) Old Testament books, (3) pop-up books, (4) New Testament books, and (5) books in a series. The junior book shelf is arranged in a similar way, omitting the pop-up books.

For the teachers we have the following resources located in another Sunday school room: (1) photocopy machine — a must! (2) filmstrip projector, filmstrips/tapes², and a portable wall screen (a large piece of white Bristol board can also be used); (3) large box of pictures and flashcard pictures (more on this below); (4) overhead projector and transparencies; e.g., Esther, Moses; (5) flannel graphs and flannel board; (6) slides — our filmstrip projector converts to a slide projector; (7) cardboard building blocks (look like bricks); (8) puzzles and games; (9) puppets; (10) craft books; (11) songbooks, and (12) miscellaneous teacher notes, guides, and activities.

Each teacher is free to borrow the resources. Most of them are not carded. They are returned when the teacher is finished using them.

The flashcard pictures³ are a nice addition to our teaching resources. Each package consists of between 11 and 30 cards, depending on the Bible story. The cards are 10" x 13" each and are in color. They tell the story of a Bible character. After the teacher has told the story using the cards, the cards can be mixed up and the

pupils can sequence them and retell the story. A lesson book comes with each set of cards. The cost varies depending on the set you buy.

Some may be interested in how we promote the use of the library by our Sunday school children. Three Sundays of the month the children, ages three to twelve, have their own closing exercises as a group downstairs while the adults and teenagers have their closing upstairs. We sing hymns from the children's hymn book (our own compilation), one class each week tells and/or shows what they have learned in class, we say the Lord's Prayer once a month and the other Sundays a brother gives a prayer. It is during this closing session that new library books are shown, new resources for the teachers are shared, and reminders are made to visit the library.

Report 2

Over the years as a Sunday school superintendent I have learned that there is no perfect curriculum (i.e., published set of Sunday school lessons). The material in one curriculum may be too involved for one teacher or not provide enough background material for another. Consequently, I decided to stock as much resource material as possible for our teachers to use, including various Christadelphian Sunday school curricula.

Our move in this direction began with a goal. After years of using one curriculum or another, we took a complete break from prepared curricula altogether. As a Sunday school we wanted to spend a year specifically on the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, a theme not covered in any one curriculum with the particular emphasis we wanted. Meeting this goal presented quite a challenge to us, since the lesson material was not contained in any one book. The teachers had to use a variety of Christadelphian publications for their material.

The need for a Sunday school resource library became clear. For us, this required the installation of some extra shelves in one of our classrooms. For a Sunday school without its own building, it might require the superintendent, a teacher, or an ecclesial member to make space available in a home. We have since gone back to using a planned program of studies for the Sunday school. In the process we continue to make modifications and to build an inventory of supplemental resources for our teachers to use.

Here are the vendors of four Sunday school lesson programs (curriculums) produced by the brotherhood. The information is current.

- Birmingham Central Sunday School Scheme, available from The Christadelphian Office: www.thechristadelphian.com. Click on SHOP and select PREACHING RESOURCES.
- Christadelphian Sunday School Union, UK, materials: www.cssu.org.uk. Some materials can be downloaded from web site. Orders from the USA should be placed on-line via website. Enquires to Karen Phillips, karencssuorders@yahoo.com; Canadian vendors are Peggy Handsaeme, edle@telusplanet.net, and Alan Ghent, aghent@mac.com.
- Australian Christadelphian Sunday School Union materials: www.acssu.org.au.

- Christadelphian Sunday School Association materials: www.cssa.asn.au. The North American vendor of CSSA materials are David and Jeffery Waye, (e-mail na_rep@cssa.asn.au or jwaye@currys.com.) Tel 905-891-7647.

Information about other educational materials and suggestions for Sunday school resource centers are invited. I will be happy to hear from you.

*Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)
sundayschool@tidings.org*

Notes:

1. Report 1 — Mary Jane Farrar, “The Sunday School Resource Center, What others are doing”, *The Joy of Sunday Schooling*, Winter, 1993, p.4. Report 2 — Gordon Dangerfield, “The Sunday School Resource Center, What others are doing”, *The Joy of Sunday Schooling*, Spring, 1993, p.12.
2. Of course, we would use and LCD projector instead of a filmstrip projector these days.
3. A Beka Book Flash-A-Card, Pensacola Christian College, Pensacola, FL 32523-9160. Go to abeka.com and search Flash-A-Card. Titles and prices are provided by grade level. Many of the picture cards are very good, but keep in mind that these are not Christadelphian products.

Youth Speaks

A Study in 1st Thessalonians

During the week of July 1-7th, 2012, the first California Christadelphian Youth Conference will be held in Ojai, CA, God willing. This camp is modeled after the Manitoulin Youth Conference and it is hoped that the week will be a time filled with much study and fellowship around the Word. The topic will be **“The Letters to the Thessalonians”** and it was thought that it would be helpful to publish a series of articles in the Tidings about those letters. Thus, the members of the Youth Conference committee have put together a series which will go through each chapter of the two letters — two chapters per month. May you find these articles to be uplifting, educational, and inspiring. Any further information about the Youth Conference may be found at www.californiayouthconference.com.

On behalf of the committee, Jason Hensley.

A Letter of Love and Faith — Introduction and 1st Thessalonians 1

Maybe we do not all always feel this way, but most Christadelphians are pretty happy with the general state of our individual ecclesias. Quite a few of us live in areas where we even have a choice of ecclesias to attend, so surely the one we do attend (for personal reasons, innocent or not) is, in our eyes, mostly good. In this initial exposition of the first chapter, it is my argument that the proper context of the letters to the Thessalonians is that of Paul's reaction to an ecclesia of remarkable faith and action. If we are curious about what God's words might be to our ecclesias, granting we are considering our ecclesia to be generally clean of any major faults, Thessalonians would be a pertinent letter to read. Paul has a simple,

powerful, repeated message in first Thessalonians, “*wait for his Son from heaven*” (1Thess 1:10). That this is, and should be, our principal focus is an encouraging message. A mature believer, and an established ecclesia should never let the promise of the return of Christ to the earth leave their minds.

Introduction to Thessalonian Ecclesia

Paul’s initial visit to Thessalonica took place during his second journey, in response to the Macedonian call of Acts 16: 9. Our record there of his stay in Thessalonica is fairly short at nine verses, and it seems his time there was also short at about three weeks. There was a synagogue in Thessalonica and “*And Paul went in, as was his custom (cp Acts 13:5), and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*” (Acts 17:2¹). This did not go over well with the local Jewish leaders though, who tried to attack Paul and sacked the house of Jason in the process. Paul is sent away immediately (Acts 17:10) and it seems plausible that some of these Jews continue to chase him through the next few chapters of Acts. Still, even in so short a period, we are told that “*...some of them [the Jews from the synagogue] were persuaded...and many of the Greeks and not a few of the leading women*” (Acts 17:4). Surely as Paul says in 1Thess 2:1, “*our coming to you was not in vain.*”

With this background of how little time Paul spent in Thessalonica, especially compared to some of the other ecclesias, his motivation for writing to them becomes clearer. Encouragement and further instruction in the Hope of the coming Kingdom of God was needed.

In writing this letter, Paul is also reacting to an encouraging report from Timothy. We read: “*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love...*” (1Thess 3:6). Timothy had been left in Berea (Acts 17:14), Paul’s next stop following Thessalonica, and is thought to have re-joined Paul in Corinth, which is thought to be where Paul writes 1st Thessalonians in about AD 52, with 2nd Thessalonians following six months later.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1: You became an example to all

Paul begins the letter to the Thessalonians in his classic style, blessing with “*Grace to you and peace.*” in verse 1, as well as his admission that “*We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,*” in verse 2. But, beyond these fairly standard signatures for Paul, within the rest of the chapter we can see a true fondness for the Thessalonian ecclesia. The Thessalonian brothers and sisters must have been so well convicted of the gospel and practiced in their beliefs to cause Paul to glow so lovingly about them.

In verse 3 he remembers *their “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Initially it is a struggle to define a difference between “*work*” and “*labor*”, and the Greek definitions of the original words are not particularly enlightening. It is beautiful to pair the ideas of “*work*” and “*faith*” as they are often pitted against one another in our conversations about James and other writings. Paul describes the Thessalonians’ work coming from their faith, which shows them as true living works. “*Labor of Love*” is an idiom in our language today for a lifelong passion, which is a comfortable enough place to leave

that phrase in ascribing it to the ministry of the Thessalonians. “*Steadfastness of hope*” has to be one of the best combinations of descriptors for a group of believers’ hope. To have a hope that is unwavering and unflagging is a high goal. Psa 33:18, 22 show that a steadfast love is what the Lord shows us, and we should hope in it.

Verse 3 also has an interesting parallel to Hebrews chapter 6. “*Work of faith*” can be found in Heb 6:1, “*Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead **works and of faith** toward God.*” Then labor of love in verse 10, although here the word “work” is used: “*For God is not unjust so as to overlook your **work and the love** that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.*” And then finally “*steadfastness of hope*” in verse 18 and again: “*so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to **hold fast to the hope** set before us. We have this as a sure and **steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope** that enters into the inner place behind the curtain*” (Heb 6:19).

The gospel came to the Thessalonians “*not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction*” (1Thess 1:5) and the ecclesia “*became imitators of us and of the Lord*” (verse 6). Paul describes the ecclesia as becoming “*an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia*” in verse 7 and then again:

“For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything”(1Thess 1:8).

What high praise Paul shows the Thessalonians with this introduction, truly a description of a group of Bible believers that we should strive to be like. The word we have translated as “*sounded*” in verse 8 is translated the same in almost all versions, but the root of it is “*echoed*” which is another commendation of the Thessalonian ecclesia. Paul describes them as echoing the word of the lord, giving the idea of a clear copy and no distortion with their own message. The ecclesia was imitators of God and echoed his word. Certainly an excellent model for us and our ecclesias to have.

Ecclesias and individuals from all around “*themselves report concerning... how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*” (verse 9 and 10). The faith, love, and hope of the Thessalonian ecclesia as well as their imitation and echo of the character and word of our Lord was told to Paul by many believers and not only Timothy. In verse 10, with the first direct mention of the return of Jesus, Paul has also delivered his thesis statement for the letter. The return of Christ is the clear theme of 1st Thessalonians, mentioned directly in: 1:10; 2:10; 3:13; 4:13-17; and 5:1-4,23. It is also the theme in 2nd Thessalonians, mentioned throughout in the same way.

To focus on the return of Christ is the clear overriding point of this chapter and this letter. How true and good it is that we should always be looking forward to that time, and keeping our lives in context with the plan of our Almighty God.

By spending time looking up and looking forward we can even keep our minds from causing temporary problems for ourselves. To keep ourselves and our ecclesias focused on that glorious day we can find the comfort and peace of God. The Thessalonians were praised as examples to all the believers in their area, and then they were told to wait for the Lord. What higher calling can there be? As our Lord himself said: *“Straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”* (Luke 21:28). Wait for the Son from heaven. Wait for him, wait for him, wait for him.

Levi Gelineau, (Simi Hills, CA)

Notes:

1. All quotes are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

The Jewish Accusations — 1st Thessalonians 2

Paul was desperate to save the new ecclesia in Thessalonica from the railing attacks of the unbelieving Jews. Their willingness to stop at nothing to discredit him threatened the ecclesia's very survival. Because he was absent from Thessalonica and thus absent from the ecclesia, it was quite difficult for him to defend himself and the gospel of Jesus Christ which he taught. He was very careful to remind them how important it really is. He is telling them (and us) that the truth is so wonderful that it is worth fighting for; it is worth our every effort to protect and to strengthen it. We can see this example in Paul: not only did he teach the truth at every possibly moment, but he lived the truth to the best of his ability.

The apostle Paul in the second chapter of 1st Thessalonians is very careful to remind the believers in Thessalonica not only of his zeal and motive for his missionary work, but also of the extreme importance of the truth. Paul delineates how we must under no circumstances be deceived into thinking otherwise. At this particular time, Paul was having a great deal of trouble with the unbelieving Jews, who were doing whatever they could to stop the spreading of the truth. We can begin to see this hatred that the unbelieving Jews had towards Paul and his missionary work when they hired *“certain lewd fellows, of the baser sort”* to start an uproar in the city of Thessalonica so that they could seize Paul, and as they probably hoped, have him killed. However the leaders of Thessalonica, seeing no real threat in the accusations against Paul, but still seeking to calm the uproar, decided to ban him from the city for a certain period of time. The unbelieving Jews were not satisfied with this. After hearing that Paul had gone on to Berea, they followed him there, and had him driven out of that city as well (Acts 17:1-13).

Unfortunately, these Jews felt that driving Paul out of these cities was not enough, and they sought to discredit him, and therefore the message he was preaching, by spreading false accusations. Their goal was to destroy not only the truth, but also the apostle Paul himself. Paul in this chapter reminds the believers that they know that these accusations are not true. His accusers claimed that his teachings were based on “deceit” (v. 3) “uncleanness” (v. 3) “pleasing men” (v. 4) “flattering words” (v. 5) “cloaks of covetousness” (v. 5) seeking glory of men (v. 6) and that

he was “burdensome” to the ecclesia (v. 6). These adversaries of Paul even went as far as to forge letters to try to deceive the ecclesia (2Thess 2:1-2; 2Cor 11:26).

Paul’s defense of his character

The truth was much too precious to allow the unbelieving Jews to destroy and corrupt it with their false accusations, so Paul begins this chapter by defending the truth and himself from the charges that were made against him. He reminds those in Thessalonica of his actions and how they themselves can remember how he acted when he was among them. He points out in the first verse that his “*entrance in unto you...was not in vain.*” Strong’s defines this word ‘vain’ as “empty.” In other words he is saying that his work among them was successful and they have grown to be firm believers in the Gospel. This alone should be enough to prove to them that he was in no way trying to deceive them, and that he was sincere and genuine in his work (cp. Isa 45:18). He then continues to remind them how he was treated in Philippi. He was treated like a criminal, beaten, and imprisoned, but this did not discourage him. He still put all of his effort into preaching the truth, and being a good example to those around him. We can see the amount of effort that Paul typically gave: “*And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling*” (1Cor 2:3). He had used all the energy that he had, and was constantly worrying about the welfare of his brothers and sisters.

In verse 4 Paul reminds them that he had been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel. This is the largest responsibility that could ever be put upon one’s shoulders. Paul is implying that since God had entrusted him with the gospel, that alone should disprove the accusation that he had some ulterior motive or deceitful practice. For it is “*God which trieth our hearts*” (Jer 17:10; 11:20). Now it is important to note here that Paul is not in any way “patting himself on the back” or bragging about his accomplishments. The reason that he is doing this is because he was afraid that his brothers and sisters were going to leave the truth, because of the false rumors the unbelieving Jews were spreading. He was afraid that the brethren would be coerced into their erroneous way of thinking. The purpose of Paul’s letter was to make them realize that the Jews are not genuine and that they are deceiving everyone. He is no way gloating or bragging about his accomplishments, but rather he is reminding them that what he taught them was the truth.

Paul also confronts the accusation that his preaching was for his own personal glory. Paul states in verse 6 that because he was an apostle of Christ, he could have easily used this to his own advantage, but he did not. The only glory Paul sought was that of God. Paul was so careful to avoid being glorified of men that he even did his best to not be “burdensome” to those around him. This word “burdensome” in the Greek has the meaning of “a weight”. Paul was “*labouring night and day*” so that he could support himself and not be a burden to his brothers and sisters (v. 9). He states that because they were apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, and because they “*have sown...spiritual things, [would it be] a great thing if [they should] reap your carnal things?*” but he points out that they “*have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest [they] should hinder the gospel of Christ*” (1Cor 9:11-15). His only desire is to keep his brothers and sisters in the Thessalonian

ecclesia strong in the truth, and to be sure that they were not deceived by “the lie” being spread by the unbelieving Jews. Paul was ceaselessly teaching the gospel, and asking nothing in return (Matt 10:8). Paul’s way of teaching was quite unlike any of the preachers of his day, or of today, whose continual message is to include a vigorous appeal for funds. Rather they labored night and day “*because we would not be chargeable to any of you*” (v. 9).

The truth was so vital to Paul that he dedicated his entire life to it. He was able to live the gospel to the best of his ability. We must learn from Paul’s example, and live the truth. We must be sure that our lives can stand up to scrutiny. “*Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves*” (v. 10). People will not be convinced by those who are passionate teachers but are known to be dishonest. They will not give credence to those who break promises to their wives, to their children, to friends, employers or employees. Those who claim to offer light to them that are in darkness must not be groping in the darkness themselves (cp. Rom 2:17–22). Imagine now if Paul was found to be deceiving them, all his credibility would have been lost. His preaching would not have been credible had he not been living the life he was instructing others to live. We must, like Paul, make the truth the most important thing in our lives. We must live the truth.

Paul’s way of life

Beginning around verse 7, the apostle changes his perspective. He shifts his argument from defending himself from the false accusations that were brought against him, and goes even farther to remind them of his actions and attitude while he was among them. He was reminding them how important the truth was to him, and the continual effort that he put onto it so that those around him would believe as well. This would, in essence, remove any lingering feeling of distrust or deceit that the believers might have still held toward Paul. He explains how his attitude and manner of teaching them was like a mother feeding her baby; he would have laid down his life for the believers of Thessalonica if it was necessary. Paul reminds them that he was in essence feeding the young ecclesia of Thessalonica (Heb 5:12–14). There are numerous lessons that we can take from this. Paul is indicating that this is the way that the gospel is supposed to be given. This is the way that it was given from God (John 3:16; Isa 53:12; Gal 2:20). It must be given in love and with a sacrificial attitude, as a mother would feed her child. In addition to this, in verse 11 Paul describes himself as a father who “*exhorted and comforted and charged*” the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica to “*walk worthy of God*” (v. 11–12). Are not these the exact duties of a father? Should it not be his duty to instruct his children and to encourage them, to comfort them, and even to command them to “*walk worthy of God, who hath called [us] unto his kingdom and glory*” (v. 12).

Would Paul have had such concern for the believers and for the truth itself if his motives were impure? Absolutely not. We must learn when preaching and defending our faith that although we must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of Biblical teaching, it is vital that we also have a love for those who we hope will receive the Gospel of Christ. “*We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cher-*

isheth her children" (v. 7). "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" (v. 11). Paul, and ourselves, had the responsibility of saving people. An attitude of loving-kindness and of genuine and sincere concern for people's needs is always more effective in disposing audiences in our favor. It is no use winning the argument if we lose the person.

Paul is so grateful to those in Thessalonica because they knew that Paul was teaching the truth when they heard it. And now Paul as both a mother and a father unto the ecclesia in Thessalonica, thanks God without ceasing because they received God's word "*not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (v. 13). Paul not only tells us that we must never cease to thank God for what he has done on our behalf and on the behalf of others, but he is also telling us that the word of God has the ability to work in the lives of those who believe. It is God's word that provides us with the energy and influence to do that which is pleasing in His eyes. It is up to us to put in the effort as we see Paul did in verse 9 in that he was "*laboring night and day*". We must realize that it is through God and his word that we can get the motivation and will to "*do of his good pleasure*" (Phil 2:13).

Fellowship in persecution

In the final verses of this chapter Paul changes gears and reminds the believers of what his persecutors have done previously. The believers need to be constantly on their guard, for it is the persecutors' desire, to if it were possible, "*deceive the very elect*" (Matt 24:24). He reminds them that they have "*both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved*" (v. 15-16). He is ultimately saying that it was the unbelieving Jews who instigated the crucifixion of Christ, it was the unbelieving Jews who in times past instigated the death of the prophets, it was the unbelieving Jews that had pushed him out of Thessalonica, and finally that it was the unbelieving Jews who were continually attempting to prevent him from teaching to the Gentiles. This is not to say that Paul despised the Jews — by no means (Rom 9:1-4). He longed for the Jews to be saved, yet they would not have it. We can also notice, if we read carefully that the unbelieving Jews had even convinced the Gentiles to persecute the believers. "... *for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews*" (v. 14) This word "countrymen" means "ethnicity or race" — these were Gentiles that were persecuting them, and this fits perfectly with what Paul is saying here. The unbelieving Jews were instigators, and he seems to be warning them of this. In the latter half of verse 16, Paul reminds the believers that the judgment upon these Jews, who had been persecuting them for so long, was indeed coming. The time would come when their "*transgressions are come to a full*" (Dan 8:23; cp. Gen 15:16) and the instigators would be stopped.

A somewhat hidden element in this section that can very easily be overlooked is Paul's record of how the believers at Thessalonica came to the truth. How they went from being ignorant Gentiles, to becoming enlightened and with the hope of being found worthy in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. These steps are as follows:

- 1) “remember” {=to keep in mind},
- 2) “Ye [are] witnesses” {=to spectate},
- 3) “ye know” {=perceive, or know what must be done},
- 4) “ye received” {=to accept, associate with},
- 5) “ye received” {=take hold of, learn},
- 6) “ye became followers”,
- 7) “ye also have suffered” {to feel, or be affected by it},
- 8) “ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 9,10,11,13,13,14,14,19).

They saw how Paul acted differently from those around him; they were able to witness how he really behaved himself. Next they realized what must be done on their part, and they accepted it and associated themselves with it. Then they learned about it and took hold of it and let it affect them. Finally they had the hope of being found in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. We too must be careful to follow these last few steps as closely as we possibly can. We must truly accept and take hold of the truth and follow it every day of our lives, allowing it to affect our lives so that we can be found in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. Finally, Paul expresses his great desire to see them again. He tells them that he still has this “agape” love for them, and that he would have returned to Thessalonica to be with them if “Satan”, or the unbelieving Jews (Acts 17:5-6,13), hadn’t hindered him. He concludes this chapter with words of encouragement to all those who are looking forward to Christ’s coming. He reminds them of the hope of being in the presence of the Man who will remove all persecutions and afflictions and oppressions. For this is our “*hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing*”.

Seth Robinson (Thousand Oaks, CA)

Love people and use things; Don’t use people and love things

In society today many people put great value on their possessions. Things like the right shirts, jeans, or backpacks set the standard for social status in the schools. But people should respect others for their character and personality rather than for what they own. Also, some people will use others to gain a certain objective, Whether it is a campaign loan or an introduction to a best friend. Unfortunately people will always see others in a “what can you do for me” way.

Hopefully, in the future people will learn to love others for their companionship and their personality. Placing undue importance on material things weakens one’s ability to see the value of friendship. Personally I am ashamed that I place a value on my possessions. I don’t believe that I use people to gain more things. Once in a while things can be important, like your first report card or your great-grandmother’s picture, but real people can always bring more to your life than an inanimate thing.

Katie Stauffer

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs, Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (4) Guideline Number 3: Committing to a Relationship

As long as you both shall love

A few years back my wife and I attended a lovely garden wedding of a colleague where the young couple exchanged vows with the Minister ending his performance with the phrase “as long as you both shall love”. We looked at each other with expressions of dismay and disbelief. We were both thinking, virtually simultaneously, *did we really hear that right!* We remembered very well that when we took our wedding vows in 1959 the presiding brother ended with his prayerful blessing and the final words *as long as you both shall live*. This points out the dramatic change that has taken place in the philosophy that many young people enter into marriage in this 21st century. There was a time when marriage was viewed not only as a contract between a man and a woman, but also as a solemn vow taken before the Lord God. The teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ with regard to the sanctity of marriage were taken very seriously — “*So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Matt 19:6 ESV)

This view has virtually disappeared in our society. Some sociologists date it to the new freedoms granted woman that developed during WWII when so many found it necessary to work for the war effort. This created the start of a very different cultural stance on the permanence of marriage since women began to realize they could have independence and didn't have to rely on a man to support them. Others date it to the Vietnam War era and the whole flower child, free love, environment that was spawned by that debacle. There can be no question that the ubiquitous *so-called* middle age itch, that finds some men wanting fancy sports cars and a younger *trophy* wife, became a cliché precisely because it does frequently happen. The corresponding mid-life crisis for the married woman often coincides with the empty nest syndrome, where children are now grown and out of the home. They then, perhaps for the first time in years, turn around and look at their husbands and find a boring companion, several pants sizes larger than on their wedding day. They think of all their unfulfilled dreams that they imagine can only be accomplished by striking out on their own, or in the parlance of some social studies, by finding their own space sans husband. There are obviously many other reasons for a marriage to fail to last a lifetime; in fact it has been said that there are as many varied reasons¹ as there are couples that divorce. Regardless of how or when this decline in regarding marriage vows as a sacred lifelong commitment started to happen, it is clear that this behavior is progressively encroaching more and more into our own community. The prevailing culture, in general, has come to regard marriage as an open-ended contract between two people that can be terminated by either party whenever they might find themselves being no longer happy in the relationship.

The teaching of Christ

Personal happiness and self-fulfillment is not necessarily a bad thing, but when it is the only thing in a relationship one can be pretty sure disaster is pending. The idea of “me first” became so prevalent towards the end of the 20th century that a whole era that created that attitude became known as the “me” generation. We seem to still be living with that mantra being the guiding principle in how many people view their role in entering into a marriage. Contrast this to the teaching of Jesus Christ, *“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet”* (John 13:14 ESV). As also in *“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant”* (Matt 20:27 cf Mark 10:44). Consider also, the exhortation of the Apostle Paul *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful”* (1Cor 13:4,5 ESV). One could cite many other examples from the gospels and the epistles where it is very clear that the selfish emphasis on “me, me, me” is the antithesis of the New Testament message on how one should approach relationships and this must especially be the case for a marriage partnership. If both partners approaching a marriage would take the view that was espoused to the Philippians: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”* (Phil. 2:3), a whole different dynamic would occur. The emphasis would then be on pleasing one another rather than on only satisfying one’s self. We can gain some further insight on what kind of relationship we should aim for in entering into a marriage by looking at the ultimate example given in the Scriptures, that of the bridegroom’s, our Lord Jesus Christ, feelings towards his espoused bride, the Ecclesia of the living saints (Cp. Rev. 19:7 which presents us with this husband/wife metaphor).

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of total commitment; if this were not the case then all hope for us would be lost. Can we honestly imagine Jesus forsaking us? The Apostle Paul certainly could not; consider what he told us *“...walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”* (Eph 5:2 ESV, cf Heb 9:14, 10:10). Continuing in that chapter, the Apostle tells us that we should be *“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ”* (v.21). The emphasis here is thus upon mutual submission to each other. Commitment cannot be a one-way street. I have observed over and over again that successful, happy marriages are ones in which both partners have total commitment to the relationship, to what at one time was styled “forsaking all others”. Can we imagine Christ being unfaithful to us? Hardly. Neither should one enter into a marriage with any less commitment than the vow one took at Baptism, which when properly understood was a promise that we would do our very best to serve our LORD God and follow in the footsteps of His son the Lord Jesus Christ as long as we should live.

A true marriage

One cannot leave the writings of Paul to the Ephesians without commenting on the fact that many modern Bible critics consider him to be a misogynist. These critics fasten their ire on v. 22 *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord”* and equate it as akin to slavery. What they overlook is the context of mu-

tual submission that precedes this passage. They also fail to properly interpret the verse that follows with respect to the proper attitude for the husband where the Apostle says: *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”* (v. 25 *ESV*). If a husband treated a wife as Christ loved the Ecclesia and sacrificed himself for it then such a husband would indeed be a servant to his spouse. There is nothing one sided about the Apostle’s advice. The Holy Spirit inspired his words and we know that the Scriptures teach; *“... there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal 3:28 *ESV*). Successful couples are mutually committed to their relationship with all the emotional strength that they are capable of giving. I have observed that such couples have a liaison that can be best described as a mutual admiration society. As I once heard a Sister remark about a couple she particularly admired — such a husband and wife metaphorically act as if “they were joined at the hip”.

If one expects a lifelong relationship to glow with the same aura as one’s initial reactions to *falling in love*, then one is in for inevitable disappointment. Life has a way of throwing many roadblocks into a marriage that can cause it to crash. The only thing that is certain is uncertainty; as the years go by unexpected challenges will occur that can cause a crisis in the relationship. Events such as job losses, job transfers for either partner, piled up debts, children and child rearing conflicts, in-law problems, schooling failures, conflicting goals, serious illness, disappointed dreams, abusive behavior, addictions, flirtations and others too numerous to mention can all derail a marriage. The question arises, how can I know in advance if my partner will be committed as much to our relationship as I am and willing and able to work through any challenges to arrive at mutually compatible solutions? The answer is that it is difficult if not impossible to predict with absolute confidence the response of the partners in a marriage to difficult challenges that could possibly come years in the future. **BUT**, it is possible to assess the kind of emotional resources a potential partner may have within them for dealing with unforeseen problems. There are at least three key qualities that help a relationship survive or even thrive when faced with disruptive issues. They are: the degree of dedication, ability to find accommodations, and willingness to compromise.

Let’s consider briefly each of these three key qualities in terms of assessing a potential lifetime partner.

Too many people have such stars in their eyes when they fall in love that they fail to step back and impartially evaluate all the qualities of their potential mate. Even worse, they may even come to a realization about serious faults only to convince themselves that they can change him or her! Such changes rarely happen.

Observing that your prospective partner is dedicated to the Ecclesia is a good starting point for consideration. If baptismal vows before God, and our Lord Jesus, are not taken seriously why would one expect such a person to be dedicated to the vows taken to his or her spouse? If a person has trouble holding down a job, or being dependable and reliable in many big or even little ways, during the dating regime, why would they be better after marriage? Dedication to the relationship is critical to a happy marriage.

The ability to reach accommodation and compromise is also a must for success. It is almost impossible for two people to come into a relationship with such total compatibility that there is never any possible chance of future conflict (in spite of the implications of many Internet dating services that appear to guarantee perfect harmony). The major route to overcoming conflict is for the persons involved in a partnership to reach accommodation and compromise as situations arise. How does this work and what is the difference between accommodation and compromise? Basically accommodation means I don't like it, but I can live with it without making a fuss. Compromise means each partner going part way to reach a solution that is somewhere in between the extremes that either one envisaged when the conflicted issue arose. To cite a simple example – suppose the woman wants to go to an opera and the man prefers to go to a jazz concert. Neither really likes the other's taste, but one path to reach an accommodation would be something like – she being willing to attend his jazz concert while he agrees to going along with her to the opera (neither necessarily has to like or appreciate the accommodation they need only endure it without complaint and they may even learn to enjoy the experience). Compromise, given the same scenario, might go something like – forget the opera and the jazz concert, let's find something we both like, and in the end they might go to a movie or a play instead. This is, of course, only a rudimentary illustration; there are many other possible ways of reaching accommodation and compromise in various situations. The critical issue is that “...(love) does not insist on its own way” (1 Cor. 13:5 ESV) and if one finds that a prospective partner is often unwilling to accommodate or compromise with your wishes then that is a danger signal that should not be ignored.

Next: Having Realistic Expectations.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. We expect to consider other reasons for marriage breakdown in the course of these essays, and prayerfully hope to provide some guidance on possible healing remedies based on Scripture.

An Eager Spirit of Exploration

It goes without saying that [the reader of this book] will encounter an unconventional idea or two. I have never regarded it as my mission in life to tell my readers what they know already. Every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God should have an abundant store from which to bring forth things new as well as old [Matt 13:52]. So one of the purposes behind this volume is to foster a more eager spirit of exploration in the pages of God's Word. The Bible contains such an abundant wealth of ideas that we can never hope to research it fully this side of the Second Coming.

Harry Whittaker,
Foreword, Bible Studies

Forgiveness (2)

As the last article (Feb. 2012) showed, forgiveness is important. Forgiveness is a basic feature of the Lord's longsuffering and merciful character. The Law of Moses provides blood-shedding sacrifices through which God promised to forgive Israel of their sins. In Solomon's prayer dedicating the temple, he repeatedly pleads for God to hear their prayers, and forgive them.

Forgiveness and the related topics of sin, confession, and repentance are fundamental to God's plan of salvation. In this article we look at Scriptural meanings for these ideas. Although studying the definitions of original Bible words is sometimes boring, we find great blessings behind the words surrounding forgiveness. Their meanings can encourage us; they give us hope.

The example of David

The first series of words comes from David's horrific sins relating to Bathsheba. David broke four of the Ten Commandments! God's forgiveness of David could well be the greatest example of personal sin and forgiveness.

We benefit greatly from this history because in addition to the outward storyline of his meltdown, we also get to "hear" David's thoughts. The Psalms give us the internal drama that makes this an excellent example of a terrible sin. David reflects:

"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa 32:5).

How much richer is David's vocabulary about sin than ours! When we mess up, even when we mess up big, we ask God to forgive our sin. That's the extent of our vocabulary. Not David. In this, we see the texture and depth of his confession. This instruction has a powerful impact on us. We learn how to talk to our heavenly Father about sin, how to confess our sins to Him, how to ask for His forgiveness, how to repent. We learn God's language for one of the most important conversations we need to have with Him, a conversation that recurs over and over again due to our sinful nature.

Definitions of sin

David uses three words, "sin", "iniquity", and "transgression". The first, "sin", means "missing the mark". At first, this might not sound so bad. Who can always throw a rock and knock the can off the post? Yet, it is bad; it is the essence of sin. Wishing so much to obey and seeing our utter failure as our actions whiz right past God's standards. The second word, "iniquity", means "crookedness". None of us considers ourselves a crook, or more to the meaning, perverse, but there it is. The third word, "transgression", means "rebellion". This is really making us squirm now. Am I rebelling? I'm a good kid, aren't I? But no, each of us has done it "my way" over "His way".

So we have three definitions and they are not pretty. Fortunately, herein starts the good news. Yes, we're each rotten. But quickly we move to the three definitions of

forgiveness that counter each one of these condemnations. Yes, all sins need God's help and rescue; and in every way, and we mean every way, God has a counter blessing. The blessing is in the texture and depth of His forgiveness.

Definitions of forgiveness

David begins this Psalm by declaring,

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile" (Psa 32:1-2).

Again, David uses three words, "forgive", "cover", and "not impute", to counter the three words for sin. The first word, "forgive", means "taken up and carried away". We can each come up with our own visual for this. For example, a man going fishing is on his way back to the marina and on the boat there are unused anchovies that are no longer needed for bait. For fun he throws the anchovies up at the seagulls chasing the boat. They dive bomb and, snatching them midair, disappear off to shore. Do you think the man will ever see those anchovies again? Well, those anchovies are like forgiven sins, taken away, never to be seen again!

The second word, "covered", means "concealed". Oh how David tried to conceal the first of his evil deeds. Oh how politicians try to cover up their corrupt deeds. Oh how each of us tries to cover up our sins. Ultimately, these efforts are to no avail. In the end, the truth will come out if we try to do the cover up ourselves. In contrast, when God forgives our sins, they are truly covered. Isn't that a huge relief? You don't have to do it yourself. God will do it for you, if you confess your sins to Him, repent, and ask for forgiveness.

The third phrase, "not impute", means "not think about, not consider". Our God is infinitely greater than any man: when He forgives our sins, He forgets they ever happened. David celebrates these blessings in another Psalm:

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa 103:10-12).

This concept continues in the New Testament where the word "justify" is used of God's forgiveness as if the sins never happened at all. What a generous God!

I like to carry my own sins

God is so great and yet even in all this we like to carry our sins around for a while, even sometimes for a lifetime. There's the story of an old man in early America. He's walking down the cart path with a 50 pound sack of potatoes. A man in a horse-drawn cart comes along and offers him a ride. The old man climbs into the cart. As they go along, the driver sees that the old man is still holding the heavy sack on his shoulders. He asks the old man, "Why don't you drop the potatoes in the back of my cart?" The old man replies, "No, I don't want to make a bigger burden for your horse!" Isn't that ridiculous? Aren't we ridiculous? We carry our sins "righteously" we think, and the cart is there to drop them off. And no, it isn't

a bigger load on the horse! So, *“let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb 12:1).*

Definitions of confession

Next, we'll look at two definitions of “confession”. The first is from the Old Testament: the Hebrew word “yadah” literally means “to hold out your hand” and can mean all sorts of things. One meaning is hiding stolen candy from the candy jar and your mommy telling you to reveal what you are hiding in your hand. A second is illustrated by the following word picture. Suppose you are walking through a jungle and you fall into a pit that is hidden by jungle leaves. You are deep in this pit and you panic, trying as you can to get out. But you can't! You try everything. You are desperate. Looking for roots, rocks, footholds, try as you might you cannot get out. Finally you give up; you cannot get out by yourself. Then in that moment of despair you lift up your hand towards God and His hand meets yours and He lifts you out. You have held out your hand to make peace with God and He extends His hand to meet yours.

The lesson is to stop trying to crawl out of the hole we are in, because God's hand is always within reach.

The second word is from the New Testament: the Greek word “homologeō” combines “homo” meaning “same” with “logeō” meaning “logic” to form the concept “to think the same”. It's that epiphany we have when we have messed up where we slap our forehead and say, “What was I thinking?” Finally, we agree with God and realize our thinking was flawed.

Confession pitfalls

Here are a couple examples where our confession thinking is not the same as God's. The first type is the “backhanded confession”. Have you heard something like this? A man says to his wife, “Honey, you're so pretty I don't even notice the 25 pounds you've put on!” How do you think that will go over? In the guise of a compliment it is really a jab, a big one. We must watch our confessions because they can go just like that. “Yes, God, I messed up, but they were so bad too.” “Yes, God, I went over the line, but they were teasing me.” “Yes, God, I was gossiping, but everyone was doing it.” Do these confessions sound ridiculous to you? We've all done them; sadly, we routinely catch ourselves doing them. Think three times before confessing to someone. The first two will likely have some backhandedness to them.

The other example of confession mis-thinking is that many confessions are not specific. If your son came to you with bruises and a broken steering wheel in his hand and said he's sorry, but that's it, how would you feel? You are going to be curious about what happened and demand some kind of explanation. Maybe we do well in our private prayers in this regard, but at least sometimes, perhaps when it's late and we're tired, we resort to a common non-specific line, “God, forgive me for all my sins.” Have we really “held out our hand” to God? In our public prayers, what kind of detail is in them? The public prayers of Nehemiah, Daniel, Ezra, and others were quite graphic in their confessions of the sins of Israel.

Definitions of repentance

There are three Bible words (two Hebrew and one Greek) for “repentance”. The order these are revealed in Scripture is likely an intended progression. The first word “nacham” means “to breath out, groan, lament”. It is a gasp, an emotional discharge because you are sorry. The second word “shuwb” means “to turn back, go to the starting point”. A modern way of saying this is “a do-over”, or in golf terms, “a mulligan”. If a police officer has ever given you a warning instead of a ticket, you know the idea. After it happens you become a model citizen. You got a do-over and you learned your lesson. This is the idea. The third word “metanoeo” means “to think differently”.

If you put these three words together you get a complete picture of repentance, and it reflects all that we can do. The sigh is the emotional element, the turning back is the action element, and the changing our thinking is the intellectual element. In doing these three things, we mirror David’s repentance. Audit yourself to prove it.

A rich language

David’s phrases in Psalm 51 provide a rich vocabulary for penitence; the following phrases are taken from the KJV, NIV, The Message, and other translations:

“Have mercy upon me, O God... Wipe out my bad record... I know how bad I’ve been – my sins are staring me down... Against You, God, only have I sinned... Cleanse me with your forgiveness and I will be clean... Scrub me, and I will be whiter than the snow... Hide your face from my sins... Blot out my iniquity... Create in me a pure heart... Renew a steadfast character from the chaos in my life... Do not cast me from your presence... Or fail to breathe holiness in me... Restore in me the joy of your salvation... Grant me a willing spirit to sustain me... Save me from bloodguilt... Going through the motions doesn’t please you... A flawless performance doesn’t please you... You desire of me a broken spirit, a contrite heart.”

Conclusion

Sometimes we think there is some insidious checklist and if we don’t score 85% or higher then God will be displeased with us. So if you take all these definitions and see your deficiency, well, that’s what it’s all about. You do lack. Your confession, forgiveness of others, and repentance are not complete. Think of it this way. When your lovely child comes to you and is crying and full of remorse for something they’ve done, don’t you find yourself eager to comfort and encourage them? They will not say the perfect words; they will not restore the prized coffee mug to an unbroken state, but you will be forgiving them even before their inadequate words can be spoken. So much more is our heavenly Father eager to forgive us: “*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him*” (Psa 103:13). Confession and repentance are the essential starting points for forgiveness. Give up on the do-it-yourself approach and hold out your hand to God. He will lift you up and fill in all that is lacking!

Next: We must forgive others

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

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

(2) Teaching and Examples from the Old and New Testaments

This is the second in a four-part series; Part 1 was about understanding Biblical oneness and presented God's gender roles from creation, and Parts 3 and 4 will consider some of the most common objections to gender roles as taught in the Bible.

Male headship in the Old Testament

We've already seen (in last month's article) how the Law of Moses taught that men and women were equally responsible for sin and equally able to attain salvation. However, this shared responsibility between men and women was operated under the overarching spiritual leadership of men in a system designed by God. The following are just a few examples to show that God consistently placed men in positions of leadership and teaching under the Law:

- Before Israel was a nation, the blessing from God and the promises were passed down through the males in the family, usually the firstborn males. In the nation of Israel, the inheritance was passed down through sons (in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad who had no brothers, Moses told the daughters *according to the word of the LORD* that in order to receive their father's inheritance, they must marry men from their own tribe (Numb 36).
- The heads of each family in each tribe were always male (Numb 1:16). The princes over each tribe were always male. Wise men were chosen in the wilderness to judge among the people (Deut 1:13-15).
- Aaron and his sons were the priests of the congregation. This was a matter of lineage, and not a matter of who had the most priestly skill or merit. Note that this limited not only women in the congregation, it also limited anyone outside of Aaron's family; a man from Judah or Dan could become a judge, a prophet or a hero of the people, but he could not be a priest, not without disrupting God's order.
- The priests' role primarily involved overseeing religious service and teaching the congregation (Deut 20:2-3; 24:8; 2Kgs 17:27; 2Chron 15:3; Neh 8:8-9; Mic 3:11; Mal 2:7). There could never be a female priest without disobeying God's design.
- Although there were some female prophets and one female judge, all of the known authors of the Old Testament were men. As far as we can tell, God consistently chose to preserve His message to believers through men.
- Finally, God promised to bring redemption through a male child, God's only-begotten Son, who would follow the lineage of the male kings of Judah and sit on David's throne. This process required a faithful virgin, of course; but the King himself would be male.

Remember my disclaimer in "Part 1" of this article? I'm not seeking to show all of the ways women served God in the Old Testament — to do so would take an entire book. The list above does not exclude faithful women from having an im-

portant place in God's plan, but it does show that the job of leadership – especially in teaching – was carved out specifically for men. This isn't because men are said to be better suited for this job, but to draw believers' minds back to Adam and forward to Christ. Taking the total message of the Old Testament guidelines for religious service, it seems that the Hebrews were meant to see the roles given to Adam and Eve at creation as extending over the whole congregation and applying to all men and women.

Male headship in the New Testament

Wait a minute, you might be thinking ... the priestly system of the Law doesn't apply to believers in Christ! The specific roles of the Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods may have ceased, but the examples of male leadership in God's design do not stop with the book of Malachi. If they did – if this precedent was only visible in the Old Testament – we might have greater reason to question whether God still desires a difference in Brothers' and Sisters' roles today. However, this isn't the case. The overarching theme of male headship in the Old Testament continues in the examples and instructions given to the ecclesia of Christ.

Just like in the law, ecclesial hierarchy in the New Testament doesn't take away from the spiritual responsibility or salvation of Sisters – instead, it outlines a functional relationship that is meant to teach a spiritual lesson. Paul explains this hierarchy in 1Cor 11:3: *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* This verse outlines three separate relationships:

- 1) God is the head of Christ.
- 2) Christ is the head of "every man" (Christ's body; the saints).
- 3) Man is the head of the woman.

In this verse, we see that men and women are both under the headship of Christ, with all of us being a part of his body. However, there is also a way in which women in the ecclesia are under the headship of men. The word for head (Strong's #2776) can mean the literal head of a body, or can be metaphorical for anything supreme, chief, or prominent. It's easy to see how a physical head can represent leadership or prominence; the human head directs the body, and the body gives the head the ability to accomplish its purposes. The body would not be able to accomplish anything without the head, neither the head without the body — a point which Paul makes in 1Cor 11:11 by saying *"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord"*. The physical head must care for the body by protecting its health and well-being, and must listen to the body in order to benefit from its help and to discern its needs. Finally, the head is the only part of the body that has a mouth; therefore, the head communicates for the body. This mini-parable alone isn't sufficient to describe the New Testament's teaching on this subject, but using Paul's imagery gives us insight into the mind of God, and how He sees the ecclesia. How does this work out practically? One way is that Brothers are specifically given the jobs of teaching and leadership over the ecclesia. We learn this from the New Testament's explicit instruction, and from the examples we have of the way the first century ecclesia operated.

1Tim 2:11-12 is one of the specific instructions on this subject: *“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”* To understand this passage, first we have to understand what is meant by women learning *“in silence”*. The word for *“silence”* (Strong’s #2271) doesn’t mean absolute silence, as when a person is muzzled or dumb — rather, it means quietness. To get a clearer picture of what kind of quietness is meant, we can look at another passage where the same word is used:

“For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2Thess 3:11-12).

It doesn’t say that these busybodies are never to utter a single word — instead, they are to hold their tongues and keep their peace. This is not the same as being muzzled from speaking, but rather, making a conscious choice not to speak. In contrast, when you’re a teacher, your role is clearly to speak out, be heard, challenge, educate, and exhort an audience.

How should this quietness be exercised? The next verse tells us: *“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence”* (1Tim 2:12). The way a Sister in Christ chooses quietness is by abstaining from both teaching and usurping authority. But is this saying that a woman may give no instruction at all, to anyone? The first two ideas in this phrase are parallel, meaning that the terms *“to teach”* and *“to usurp authority over”* both relate to the following phrase *“the man”*. Sisters are simply instructed not to teach or have authority over men in the ecclesia, but rather, to learn in quiet peace. In contrast, men in the New Testament ecclesias are never commanded not to teach women or their fellow men, but women in this verse are specifically asked to refrain from teaching men.

The word for *“teach”* here is *didasko* (Strong’s #1321), meaning *“to give instruction.”* There is nothing in the word *“teach”* that means anything other than *“teach”* — it is the common New Testament word for instruction. The word for *“usurp authority”*, *authenteo*, is said by Vine’s Expository Dictionary to mean *“to exercise authority on one’s own account, to domineer over...to usurp authority...to have dominion”*. This verb is translated *“to have authority”* in the NIV, and *“to exercise authority”* in the ESV. It is clear that teaching and leadership are being addressed, and all we have to do is look at the next time chapter to see what kind of authority Paul is referring to – 1 Timothy 3 contains instructions for ecclesial leaders, and specifies that a bishop must be *the husband of one wife*. This language tells us that positions of ecclesial authority were supposed to be held by men.

If we’re wondering how these instructions from Paul work out practically, the tense of the verb in these verses can give us some insight. Rather than using the Greek aorist tense, which means a simple event or happening, he used the present tense, meaning a condition or process. This sounds more complicated than it really is: for example, the Greek word *“to serve”* in the aorist tense means to serve on one particular occasion, whereas in the present tense it means *“to be a servant”*. Here’s an example of a passage where the distinction between the aorist and the present

tense is important: 1John 3:9, which says, “*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*”. If read in the aorist tense, it would seem to mean that if you commit a single act of sin, you are not born of God. However, John used the present tense in this verse, which takes on the meaning of being a continual sinner. The New American Standard Version translates this verse with more attention to the verb tense: “*No one who is born of God practices sin*”. In 1Tim 2, Paul used the Greek present tense when he said “*I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority*”. He was therefore not talking about incidental teaching, where a Sister might, in answering a question for example, convey a truth to a Brother. Sisters shouldn’t worry about disobeying Paul by accidentally teaching something; it’s just saying that the role or position of a teacher or leader in the ecclesia is not for Sisters.

1Cor 14:34-35 sheds further light on these instructions: “*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*”

The word used for “speak” (Strong’s #2980) means the literal act of uttering words, and it is also the New Testament word used for “preaching”. These verses rule out taking on a teaching role in the ecclesia. So we don’t make the mistake of thinking that these verses are directed at just one group of disorderly women in Corinth, we can see the two uses of the phrase “*in the churches*” in verses 33 and 34, showing that Paul meant his instructions to be applied throughout all the ecclesias of Christ. If we’re wondering whether these are merely guidelines that we can pick and choose whether to follow, verse 37 makes it plain: “*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*”.

We base our Christadelphian practices on these “*commandments of the Lord*”, but we also see these principles reinforced by the way the first century ecclesia conducted itself. The following are just a few of many examples:

- Jesus had women ministering to him (Mark 15:41), but he designated 12 men as apostles and sent them out to preach (Luke 9:1-2).
- Jesus told his 12 disciples that they would sit on 12 thrones in His kingdom (Matt 19:27-28), continuing the leadership position they would take after his death. After the death of Judas, the twelfth apostle was also a man chosen by divine lot (Acts 1:24-26).
- When it came time to appoint an apostle to the Gentiles, Jesus appointed a man, Paul.
- Although women were undoubtedly involved in the workings of the ecclesias, and sometimes received mentions from Paul, his descriptions of bishops (or “overseers”) and elders showed that these roles were meant for men; they use male pronouns throughout and refer to the qualified men as *husbands* (1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). We do not read of Sisters taking these roles.
- We consistently read in the book of Acts of men leading the Jerusalem Council, men standing up to speak and preach, men leading the committee for the

widows' ministration, men collecting and conveying the Jerusalem fund – the overwhelming evidence of Acts consistently places men in speaking and leadership roles (Acts 2:14-16; 4:34-37; 6:1-6; 11:30; and 13:1 to name a few).

- And finally, no New Testament book was penned by a Sister — God chose to leave His instructions on record for the future ecclesia through Brothers.

I'll re-state my disclaimer again: my purpose in this article is not to detail all of the ways in which a woman can serve the Body of Christ, except to say that apart from the roles involving teaching and leadership of men, the whole spectrum of service is open to her. For a Sister who wants to be involved in teaching of some sort, there are a myriad of options available, but one in particular stood out to me in my reading: women are specifically called to teach other women.

"The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

Older women are given a special vocation to teach younger women about self-control, purity, and what it means to be a Godly wife and mother. How many of us who are enthusiastic about speaking and teaching have pursued this particular Biblical calling to the very best of our abilities?

More than just a symbol

At the beginning of this article, I asked whether you know how to answer the question: "Why do we do it that way?" When researching this subject, I expected to find one or two New Testament passages that explain the Biblical, complementary roles of Brothers and Sisters, and I thought that this would be enough to summarize the Bible's position. Instead, what I found was a wealth of evidence in both the Old and New Testaments supporting God's design for male teaching and leadership, complemented by female help, submission and support. I learned why these roles are sometimes very difficult for us to perform; after all, our predecessors, Adam and Eve, failed to live up to them from the beginning of creation, and we share their nature. I learned that Biblical roles are a teaching device, and that we should be able to look at our ecclesias and see Christ and his Body in our Brothers and Sisters. By understanding and living our roles, we can learn what it would have been like in the Garden of Eden if Adam and Eve had worked together from the beginning.

Some of us may find that Biblical gender roles seem meaningless to us; after all, if men are no more spiritual, talented or intelligent than women, why would God want us to behave differently? Does He want us to have different roles just for the sake of ritual role-playing? When we make this complaint, we're forgetting a characteristic of our God: He loves symbolism. He uses symbols throughout the Bible to teach His children, and He doesn't want us to just observe them academically, from the sidelines: He asks us to jump in, to experience and engage in them personally. Think of all of the sacrifices, feasts and priestly responsibilities

contained in the Law, the powerful metaphor of baptism, and how every week, we take the bread and wine in symbolic remembrance of Christ's body and blood. The repetitive ritual of the breaking of bread isn't just empty role-playing for us — it's representation! God chose for us to be saved by the representative sacrifice of Christ, and representation and symbolism are an inescapable part of our lives as believers. In the same way, the symbols of head and body in the ecclesia are meant to draw our minds to Christ and teach us to obey him even when it is difficult. There is power in training ourselves to think like God, to truly love these symbols and to spend our lives participating in them.

It's never easy to go against the grain of our culture, or our nature. But that's exactly the kind of courage we need to cultivate. The world changes, but God's principles remain the same, which is why true believers all over the world and throughout time — from the 1st century ecclesia to the 21st century ecclesia — can meet together in fellowship. We believe in a God whose ways are higher than our ways, whose teachings transcend cultural barriers and withstand the test of time.

If it hasn't happened already, it probably will — someone will ask you, "Why do we do it that way?" Will you know how to answer?

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)



Letters

Dear Editor,

In the December, 2011 issue, Bro. Morgan comments on Paul's words in Romans 5:12: "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" Bro. Richard writes that all men die not because Adam sinned, but because each person is a sinner individually worthy of death (excepting, the Lord Jesus). Unfortunately, this completely reverses the overall point of Rom. 5:12-21.

Paul's exposition is that God has been consistent in His principles. As by **one** man — death; so by **one** man — life. Furthermore, elaborating: that as by **one** man — judgment, condemnation, sin reigning to death; so by **one** man — justification, righteousness, grace reigning to life.

The key word in these verses is "**one**" making the point of God working on the basis of, as Bro. John Carter terms it, "federal heads". God gives opportunity of "life" to "many" because of the obedience of the **one** man, Jesus Christ.

Every one of us has earned death "for that all have sinned". So in Romans 5:12 Paul both states the federal head principle and refutes (actually as a parenthetical statement) any idea that God has dealt unjustly with us as individuals.

A major reason Paul wrote Romans was to help the brethren answer Jewish challenges that he knew, from his own past experience, would be thrown at the ecclesia. We'd suggest one of these issues was the Jewish objection to the heart of

the gospel: **one** man's perfect obedience opened the way to life for many others. The Jews would argue each person must establish themselves personally righteous before God. Paul's response to this was that if one accepts that **one** man's sin lead to death for all! So it is perfectly consistent that **one** man's righteousness can lead to life for all."

Your brother in Christ
Don Styles (Ann Arbor, Michigan)

Reply:

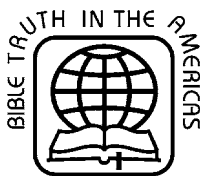
We do inherit from Adam our mortal state and the sentence of death that has come upon all mankind and so I do agree that Paul presents the federal head principle. But we do not die because Adam sinned otherwise we could charge God with being unrighteous for condemning everyone to death because someone else sinned — "the soul that sins it shall die". The way I read Romans 5:12 is that we die in Adam because we all sin, that is Adam represents us because he explains what we're all like. Even though babies die: if they had reached an age of maturity they would sin just like anyone else and so the sentence passed upon them would have been shown to be right. The weight of evidence is overwhelming that flesh causes sin and so all flesh dies as per the divine edict. So yes, we do inherit the sentence from Adam but it's because we are all sinners, not because we pay the price for Adam's sin. The extreme ideas that come from a misapplication of Romans 5 are things like "Original Sin" and "Substitution" needs to be put aside.

We also have to be aware that our Lord shared in our predicament. Being born of a woman under the law he came in the same flesh and blood nature as the rest of mankind and he showed on the cross that it was right that even a sinless man had to put the flesh to death. Eventually the flesh sins: it is the nature of the flesh to do such. Jesus was no different and he had to deal with sin at its source: the flesh. As a son of Adam he came under the same curse we are all born with, but with the important difference that he conquered sin, and subsequently death, by his complete repudiation of the flesh.

Your brother in Christ,
Richard Morgan (Book Road, Hamilton, ON)

"The explanation of Scripture is that the race as a whole is involved in the ruin brought about by the first head [i.e., Adam]; that a new head... a last Adam [i.e., Christ], has been raised up who has broken the entail [i.e., the inheritance of death from Adam]... that as men suffer the consequences of the first Adam's sin, they may share the last Adam's work of righteousness.

"A possible objection may be raised that it does not seem right that men should suffer the consequences of another man's wrongdoing. But leaving the Bible for a moment, is this not at any rate a fact in life? By heredity, the effects of evil lives are borne by generations who did not share in the wrong" (John Carter, Paul's Letter to the Romans).



Bible Mission News

Guatemala — “Day Zero” January 29, 2012

Guatemala is a bustling, busy city. In the middle of the maze of streets, buses, concrete buildings and shops of every specialty imaginable, there sits a little light stand, with its tiny flame burning steadily despite the darkness of the world around it.

The ecclesia in Guatemala is very young, and in its few years, has seen many ups and downs. Since its birth in 1995, with the baptism of one brother, the ecclesia has swelled to over 10 members, and then through death, the pull of the world, and discouragement, had dwindled down to three brothers. These three brothers have remained constant throughout the changing tides, and it seems that their patient continuance is bearing fruit.

Upon arrival in Guatemala City on Friday afternoon, we checked in quickly at our hotel, and headed to the hall to meet up with Bro. Jorge Trinidad, and Daniel Carlos Pelen, a young man hoping to be baptized. We spent over three hours with them, discussing the “things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” Daniel gave an excellent confession of his faith, quoting verse after verse of Scripture and reminding us that even in these dark days, there can be found a love of Scripture among the youth of the world. Yes, God-willing we would be witnessing the birth of another son of God at the end of the weekend!

Since there is no missionary presence in Guatemala at the moment, we try to ensure that the brethren receive a weekend visit a few times a year, either from neighbouring El Salvador, or from further abroad. Invitations to four public lectures (two on Saturday and two on Sunday) are mailed out to the many postal correspondence students. We were thrilled to have two brothers and a sister join us from El Salvador, to help with the events of the weekend. On Saturday afternoon, we held the first two public lectures, entitled “The angels which kept not their first estate”, and “The New Creation in Jesus Christ”. We had seven visitors in attendance — four of whom have been attending regularly for a long period of time. During the break in between classes, the hall echoed noisily with conversations in every corner of the building, centered around the Word of God. It is wonderful to see the excitement of those who are coming to an understanding of the Truth, after being taught fables their whole lives. Their enthusiasm bubbles over, and they nod excitedly during classes. It is definitely contagious!

On Sunday morning, during the memorial meeting, we joyfully witnessed the baptism of our new, young brother Daniel. He smiled all morning. He had taken the path to baptism very carefully and seriously and was rejoicing that the day of



his vow had arrived. We noticed that at the top of the page in his notebook in which he takes notes during classes, beside the date was written “Day Zero”. We ask that you join us in prayer for our Bro. Daniel, that he may be daily encouraged to continue in his new walk towards the kingdom.

The memorial service was followed by another two Bible classes. They were entitled “The

New Life in Christ”, and “Elijah and Elisha — Unlikely and Inseparable Companions”. This day, there were even more visitors in attendance, for a total of nine visitors! Again, the conversation was centered around the Word of God, and the beauty of the Truth. Two of the regular visitors, a married couple, have expressed their desire for baptism, and preparation is underway to that end, for the end of the year, God-willing.

After a few years of seeming ‘drought’ in the land, it is so encouraging to see that our Lord still is calling out a people for His name among the Guatemalans. We were reminded of how beneficial a missionary couple would be in this beautiful, historical city. One of my favourite hymns in the Spanish hymnbook, has these words as a refrain throughout the hymn (roughly translated into English!):

“Oh, Lord, there is much labour, and labourers are still needed. Give us light, fervent faith, and love; and labourers there will always be.”

Daniel and Ashley Robinson, CBMA representatives

A Visit to the Brethren in Lima, Perú

In 2009 I had travelled to Lima and met the first Christadelphians in Peru, brethren César Franklin and Julián Enríquez. I was very happy that now there were people in my native country who believed the same things I did and valued the word of God more than the things of this world. I met with them, their families and interested friends in a hotel in downtown Lima for a breaking of bread and a class on Psalms. We had a very nice time meditating on the Word.

Then in November of 2011 I made another trip to Peru and didn’t want to miss the chance to visit the Lima ecclesia. I found that there was now a third brother, Flavio Carmona. What great news! Although I was there for only a week, I was able to meet with the brethren on two occasions. The first time was on Sunday the 27th. My wife Megan, our children Paige and Owen and I met with César and Flavio at the latter’s house to break bread. I gave the exhortation, entitled “The Word and Its Challenge”, whose theme was that we should show the qualities of the Creator through our words and deeds. After the meeting we had refreshments and discussed the other places in the world where there were Christadelphians, there being a large map



of the world on the wall. We also talked about how Peru had changed in recent years. Afterwards I gave a talk on the rôle of prophecy today and news about the countries mentioned in Ezequiel 38. In short, as we are told in 2Pet 1:19, the prophetic word is sure and similar to a lamp shining in a dark place: it gives us hope and helps us to focus on what we

should be doing to ensure that we have a part in the coming Kingdom of God. We certainly had an encouraging day! I also discovered that the brethren met at Flavio's on Thursday evenings for a Bible class to help prepare Flavio's wife Gloria for baptism. More great news!

The second meeting was on the following Thursday, when I returned with a cousin of mine who is interested in the Bible. We met with César, Flavio, Gloria and their son Nahuel. (Brother Julián, whose wife Katia is also studying for baptism, was not able to be at the meetings because he had to work). That evening I gave a talk entitled "My Name is Legion",



pointing out the similarities between Isaiah 65 and Mark 5. The healing of the Gadarene demoniac symbolizes the sweeping changes which will be wrought on the earth when the kingdom of God is established (Isa 65:17-25) and illustrates the fact that after we have found the Truth and are baptized, we are clothed and come into our right mind (Mark 5:15; Gal 3:26-27). Finally, there was a reminder of the Lord Jesus Christ's call to announce to others what God has done for us: "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19). It was a very productive class with good questions and comments. Although it had been warm during the day (it was spring in Lima), the evening was chilly because of the wind. Since I was only wearing a short-sleeved shirt I lost my voice by the end of the evening and for the next few days. But what a great conversation we had!

Finally it was time to leave. The time had certainly gone by quickly. The visit to Lima was very pleasant and encouraging. My family and I took away some lovely memories of the brethren and their families. I pray that God will help them remain strong in the faith and will add more members to their little group.

Bro. Roberto Lara

Panama —The Red Devils Are Going!



Change is happening rapidly in Panama! The buses, affectionately known as “Red Devils”, which have been a means of transport throughout the capital and across the isthmus for over 50 years, are now being replaced by new air conditioned buses with provision for handicapped passengers.

Riding in one of these new buses is a far different experience from the past where loud music, coin-tap-

ping passengers, bold artwork both inside and out along with slogans often boasting the owner’s prowess, were part of a culture that is fast disappearing. Flying past the city towards the airport and seeing the high buildings reaching skyward is reminiscent of cities such as Miami, Florida.

Construction has now started on a subway system, a first in Central America. With all the changes happening in this hot tropical country which bridges the Americas, we can only wonder how the Truth will prosper in the rapidly expanding Panama City and the fast deteriorating city of Colon.

With few young people in the two ecclesias on each side of the isthmus, both groups are aging and only two sisters remain from the early work done in preaching during the 60’s. The faithful example of those who make up the ecclesias in Panama City and Colon is a joy to experience, as I was privileged to do for a week over the New Year. Brother Ian and Sister Nishla Neblett provided their commercial banquet hall for a buffet breakfast followed by two Bible Studies which were well attended by the brothers and sisters in Colon. The day following, Sunday, almost all the brothers and sisters from Colon travelled in three vehicles to Panama City where we enjoyed fellowship at the Breaking of Bread, a lunch prepared by the sisters and a further Bible study. These times of fellowship are precious indeed and become a very joyous occasion for the two groups who are quite isolated from each other by the distance across the isthmus, and even in Panama City itself it is now progressively more difficult to get around due to the increase in traffic. For the brothers and sisters to visit each other requires a bus ride of up to two hours each way and this limits the amount of fellowship that they are able to have during the week.

Looking back over the thirty-nine years since my wife, Beth, and I first arrived in Panama for a four-and-a-half year stay, I marvel how quickly this country has changed. I also give thanks to our Heavenly Father and to He “who walks amidst the lampstands” that there remains a remnant, a small group in this small but vibrant country, who keep the faith. Our prayers are with them.

Gordon Dangerfield

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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

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

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

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

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

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
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Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

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

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www.christadelphianchildren.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

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

BEDFORD, NS

The Bedford Ecclesia held its annual Study Day on September 17, 2011. We are grateful to Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) for giving the talks on the theme, "Pentecost Revisited". We were happy to welcome Bro. Jim and Sis. Esther to Halifax for the weekend, along with several visitors from Sussex, NB as well as interested friends from Nova Scotia.

Since our last communication we have been blessed with visits from the following brothers and sisters.: Phil and Jan Baines, Cliff and Julia Baines, Paul and Marie Baines and family, Margaret Jones and family (Sussex, NB); Clyde and Evelyn Snobelen, Pat Williamson, Myra Lucke, Elizabeth Bennett (Victoria, BC); Jean Pearson (Kinver, UK); and Margaret Pearson (Mt. Waverly, Aust.).

Work continues with Bible seminar contacts and we enjoyed our annual summer barbeque with these friends at the home of Bro. Michael and Sis. Ruth Carr.

Our ecclesia is still actively seeking more members through relocations.

Stephen D. Snobelen

BRANTFORD, ON

We have benefited from the fellowship and ministrations of our Bre. Stephen Whitehouse (Hall Green, Birmingham, UK), and Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS) during their visit for the 2011 Ontario Winter Bible School and thank them both for their positive ministrations in this area.

God willing, we look forward to our annual Little Disciples and Junior CYC Gathering at Camp Trillium (formally Apps Mill) on February 11, 2012, and Senior CYC Gathering to be held on March 3, 2012, commencing at 12:30 pm, with Bro Daniel Cadieux (Mississauga West, ON) speaking on the subject "Elisha: Power is Salvation".

Daniel Billington

BROOKLYN, NY

We rejoiced at the baptism of AKEEM DUESBURY, son of Bro. Ian and Sis. Wendy, having diligently gone through Sunday school, CYC, and a course of one-on-one instruction. The Duesbury's are originally from the Mocha-Arcadia Ecclesia in Guyana.

A new outreach group comprised of retirees from our meeting and neighboring South Ozone Park has commenced weekly outdoor preaching at various key locations in the metro area. So far, we have had three encouraging sessions in the downtown Brooklyn area and we have now moved to the Queens area.

We have had some visiting brothers and sisters over the past couple of weeks: Ronald Badlu (Sarasota, FL); Sis. Merle (Kingston, Jamaica); Jeremy Venn and Jamin McGrath (Queensland Aust.); and Bro. Gerald and Sis. Margaret from the UK. Our apologies if we left any one out.

Visitors are advised that our meeting has remain unchanged. Sunday Breaking of Bread is at 10:00am; Sunday school and workshop is at 12:15 pm and Wednesday Night mid-week Bible class is at 7:45 pm.

Clive Drepaup

CRANSTON, RI

We rejoiced with the angels in heaven as we witnessed the baptisms of NATHAN and JAMIE CLARK on Saturday evening, November 13, 2010. Bro. Nathan is the son of Bro. Chris and Sis. Bonnie Clark. On Sunday, May 8, 2011, BETHANY SOUCY, daughter of Bro. Gerard and Sis. Jane Soucy was baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have further cause for rejoicing with the parents, grandparents and great grandparents, and give thanks to our heavenly Father for our two new youngsters born just weeks apart in the ecclesia. A son, Harrison Edward Nevers was born October 6, 2011, to Bro. Morgan and Sis. Kayleigh Nevers. Also, a son, Renzio Daniel Virguetty was born October 15, 2011, to Bro. Dennis and Sis. Tiffany Virguetty.

Our CYC hosted their Annual Spring Bible Study Weekend May 13-15, 2011. Bro. Daryl Rose (Toronto West, ON) presented the study on "Parables". We enjoyed the visits of a good number of young people and brothers and sisters from New England and beyond.

Bro. Brandon Entwistle of our ecclesia is presently in Shanghai, China teaching English language at a literacy facility. He meets with a small ecclesia, presumably in Shanghai, made up of three sisters in Christ and an English brother who is also the interpreter. We miss Brandon's enthusiasm and dedication to service and are sure he brings these same qualities to the small ecclesia in China.

We thank the Wachusett, MA Ecclesia for hosting this year's New England Christadelphian Fraternal Gathering in October. Our public Bible talks on the theme, "The Bible: the Book for Today" continue. We thank the following Brethren who have presented the Bible talks and have also brought us the word of exhortation: Steve Smith, and Bob Corbeille (Granite State, NH); Jim Burns and Eric Pride (Westerly, RI); and Scott Nevers (Wachusett, MA).

The Learn To Read The Bible Effectively Seminar was discontinued for the summer months and has recently resumed with three of the six interested ladies returning.

Our sympathies are extended to Sis. Robin Rocha and her husband Jack and to their family on the death of their daughter Jennifer, 27 years of age. Jennifer battled the ravages of cancer for many years and finally succumbed to the disease.

The ecclesia held a New Year's Bible Study Weekend. We were very pleased to have Bro. Ryan King (Richmond Petersburg, VA) lead the classes on the theme, "Choose You This Day Whom You Will Serve." Our weekend began Friday, December 30, 2011, with a pre-New Years Eve dinner and the first Bible study followed by three classes Saturday, and concluding New Year's Day with the word of exhortation and the final class followed by a pot-luck luncheon. The weekend was very well attended.

Paul Haughton

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We commend our Sis. Jean Drepaul to the South Florida Ecclesia having moved into the area and we pray that she will be happy in her new ecclesia and surroundings.

We report that Bro. Cedric Joseph has removed himself from membership and is now therefore no longer in fellowship.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen, and Mabel Knapp (Union, NJ); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Matthew Link and Cornelius Kellet (Washington DC); Sandy and Janice Piskura (Meriden, CT); Steve and Cheryl McKay (Cambridge, ON); and Margaret Cummings (Moorestown, NJ).

Stewart Marsden

HONESDALE, PA

We were very happy to have had Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) visit us and give us a wonderful exhortation on January 22, 2012. We also had visitors; Denise Kowal and her daughter Rachel and her son Ryan, Jessica Lurvey and her daughter Morgan, and Lennis and Sarah Lubrano. Afterwards the sisters hosted a great luncheon with an Italian theme.

A dear brother in Malawi, Southern Africa has asked for prayers due to the fighting and hunger in that country. Prayers for all Christadelphians and for all people in that country would be appreciated.

Stephen J. DeMarco

JASONVILLE, IN

We are pleased to announce the baptism on January 14, 2012, of BRAYLON PERRY. We pray God's blessing will be with our new brother on his walk to the kingdom.

Ted Plew

LONDON, ON

We enjoyed the fellowship of Bro. Carl and Sis. Virginia Parry (Salisbury, AUS) over the New Year weekend. Bro. Carl led us in a study on "The Power of Prayer" and we thank him for his ministrations on our behalf.

Please note that the undersigned is now serving as Recording Brother. All correspondence should continue to be sent to P.O. Box 25651, London, ON, N6C 6B3 or to rbkidd@rogers.com. Tel. No. 519-690-0391.

Ron Kidd

ORLANDO, FL

The following visitors attended our meeting over the last few months: Phil and Jean Hale (Castleford, UK); Jim and Dorrie Dillingham, Moria McInturff, Eden McInturff, and Cassie Conover (Granite State, NH); Jonathan Nelson (Echo Lake, NJ); Julian and Sandra Baseley (Guilford, UK); Ron and Sue Walding (Spalding, UK); Maxine Hanson (Birmingham, UK); Alan and Nancy-Jean Markwith (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); Alan and Sandra Walker (North Bay, ON); Leon Orr (FL); Jack and Louise Green (Ocala, FL); Stephen Lockyer (UK); Alan and Chris Mills (UK); and Brian and

Sharon Adams with Jacob, Abby and Caleb (Washington DC). Many thanks to those brothers who exhorted.

Randy Davenport

PITTSBURGH, PA

We thank our Bro. Ryan King (Petersburg, VA) for his excellent classes on the subject, "Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve" presented at our CYC weekend in November. We are looking forward to our study weekend May 5-6, 2012, with Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD) entitled, "Zechariah: The Lord Shall Yet Comfort Zion, and Shall Yet Choose Jerusalem."

We were pleased to welcome the following brothers and sisters: Kyle and Tyler Misko, Don and June Weingart, and Roger and Joy Snyder (Paris Avenue, OH); Valerie Ifill (Ann Arbor, MI); Andrew Fraser, and Zach Kemp (Washington DC); and Ian and André Nibloe (Caloundra, Aust.). We thank Bre. Ian Nibloe and Don Weingart for their encouraging words of exhortation.

Please note that the Recording Brother is now Bro. Len Budney. Please direct correspondence to him at pghecclesia@gmail.com, or by phone at 412-983-1970.

Len Budney

SUSSEX, NB

The Sussex Youth Camp is scheduled to be held May 18-20, 2012, with Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON) speaking on the subject, "Man's Wisdom versus God's Wisdom." To register for the Youth Camp please contact Sis. Marie Baines by email at: pandm6@hotmail.com or by postal address at: 140 Bryant Drive, Sussex, NB, Canada, E4E 5M9. Please include a \$25.00 deposit cheque.

Our Thanksgiving Gathering will be held on October 6-7, 2012, with speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD). Please note that our Memorial Services during July and August 2012, will commence at 10 am.

Cliff Baines

WASHINGTON DC

The Washington DC Ecclesia has enjoyed the visits of many brothers and sisters over the last several months. We thank the following brethren for their words of exhortation while visiting the DC Ecclesia: Jeff Gelineau (Semi Hills, CA); Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH); John Woodward, Andy Bilello, and Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD); David King, (Richmond-Petersburg, VA); Michael Owen (Seaton, UK); John King (Brighton, Aust.); Jeff Smith (Simi Hills, CA); Craig McInturff (Shenandoah, VA); and Eric Pride (Westerly, RI).

We also report that Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura moved back to CT in May and transferred their membership to the Meriden, CT Ecclesia. We shall miss them since they were very active in the ecclesia and always opened their home for many ecclesial activities. We pray that they will continue to grow in the Lord in their new ecclesia.

In June, Sis. Helen Gibson transferred to the West Houston, TX Ecclesia. We will miss her and were thankful for her pastoral help with our aging members. She had come to us from the Honesdale, PA Ecclesia.

Our heavenly Father has blessed the Washington DC Ecclesia with more future

additions to our Sunday school. On August 6, 2011, Rhys Patrick Amis was born to Bro. Andrew and Sis. Erin Amis, and on September 11, 2011, Cameron William Perry was born to Bro. Jon and Sis. Katy Perry.

In April 2011, we enjoyed fellowship with the members of the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia and many visitors to our Semi-annual Baltimore/Washington Gathering weekend. We would like to thank Bro. Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH) who gave classes for the weekend on the subject of, "Speaking the language of God". In August 2011, we enjoyed a day of fellowship at Sandy Point State Park where we held our annual Sunday school picnic.

In November 2011, we had our annual family Bible camp at Camp Hashawha. We would like to thank Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD) who led us in a study on the epistle of James, "The Testing of your Faith and the Challenge of James".

We pray for God's care of our Sis. Abi Newth who left in November for a one year work assignment in China.

Please note that Bro. Robert Kling is the new recording brother for the Washington DC Ecclesia. All correspondence should be directed to his attention. We would like to thank Bro. Cory Crabill for his years of service as recording brother for the ecclesia.

Bob Kling

WORCESTER, MA

We thank our Bre. Steve Davis, Scott Hampton and Jim Sullivan (Boston, MA) for visiting and exhorting us during the last quarter. We have been blessed recently with the birth of a second son, Michael I. Page, to our Sis. Sarah and Kevin Page. Also, our Bro. Wayne Cortis and Sis. Anne Gauthier were wed recently. We pray our Lord will bless them all and keep us as we walk to the kingdom together.

Mark Fulmer

CHRISTADELPHIAN SENIORS' HOUSING

Rental accommodation for those fifty-five years and older is available in Simon Manor. We are accepting applications for future residents in our 11-unit building. All rooms are one bedroom and unfurnished for a low cost rental on a monthly basis. Included are free laundry facilities. Simon Manor is located behind the ecclesial hall in a single-story building. Residents must be able to care for themselves. Contact Bro. Bob Stodel, Simon Manor, 12-1431 Simon Road, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8X 3G9; 250-384-4456 or email rwstodel@telus.net.

For your holiday accommodation, Simon Manor has a one-bedroom, fully-furnished unit for rent at \$35 per night for up to two people with \$5 added for each additional person. There are special rates for long stays. The unit has twin beds in the bedroom and a double sofa bed in the living room. Contact us by mail Sis. Pat Williamson, 11-1431 Simon Road, Victoria, BC, Canada V8X 3G9; 250-721-4938; or email pwilliamson@telus.net.

Pat Williamson

Minute Meditation

How Do We React When Being Tried?

It is not what happens to us but how we react to what happens to us that makes or breaks us. William Arthur Ward observed, “In the face of unjust criticism we can become bitter or better; upset or understanding; hostile or humble; furious or forgiving.” In the face of any challenge, we can either rise to face it to the best of our abilities, with God’s help, or fall beneath it, succumbing to feelings of defeat, self-pity and anger. We cannot always control what happens to us, but we are responsible for how we react to what happens to us.

It is almost certain that sometime in our life we are going to be subjected to unjust criticism. Unjustness does not give us license to react in a sinful way to what others say or do to us. Consider how our Lord Jesus Christ faced this kind of treatment — he always reacted in the right way. Peter tells us, “when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Paul also endured hardship and bad treatment: “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”

Notice that it was their own countrymen who mistreated both the Lord Jesus and Paul. The Jews did not like the gospel that Jesus and Paul preached, so they tried to shut them down any way they could. In our day when there are different opinions circulating in our community, it is possible some may try to shut down those with dissenting viewpoints rather than opening their Bibles and discussing the issues. Those of our own community may oppose us, but we do not have the right to retaliate and fight fire with fire. We must learn to put into practice those principles that both Jesus and Paul lived by and return good for evil. Reacting calmly can be difficult when we are being opposed for standing up for what we believe are true and right principles. Paul explains how when he was mistreated, “we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.” We need to remember that all of us are God’s children and to treat each other kindly, for Christ loves us all, died for us all, and is not willing that any perish but that all may come to repentance.

Paul advises young Timothy to “avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.” When there is strife, Paul’s approach is that “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

When we fear that some in our midst are attempting to weaken or nullify our es-

sential first principle doctrines, it is right and proper to resist, but we must do so trying to redeem those in error. Paul knew that there will be those who oppose the Truth in every age. We should follow the approach that Paul told Timothy: we need to be gentle; we need to correct those who are in opposition that they may come to their senses, we need to keep on loving them even when we fear that they are going astray, and we need to pray for their recovery. Some may want to rush a quick fix to correct a problem, but patience takes time, and Paul advises us to be patient with our brethren, gently trying to help them to come to their senses, praying that God will grant them repentance.

There is no doubt that our community is being tried in these last days, and we must follow the example of Jesus and Paul and try to find the more excellent way. Jesus did speak up against the scribes and Pharisees who refused to hear his words and did not follow the law they claimed to uphold. But Jesus was so kind and patient with his little band of followers even as they quarreled among themselves as to which was the greatest. He simply got down on his hands and knees and washed their feet, even the feet of Judas Iscariot who had already decided to betray him. Jesus loved his disciples and worked with them to help them learn. He knew they were not perfect. Before it happened, Jesus prayed for Peter knowing that Peter was going to deny that he even knew his master.

Let us pray for each other. Let us willingly open our Bibles and search the Scriptures together, looking for the Truth that we may be one in spirit and understanding. Knowing that setbacks are likely, let us be willing to spend the time to be patient with one another; as our Lord is long-suffering towards us, may we be long-suffering with each other. Let us pray that the Lord will bless us and give us an answer of peace.

Robert J. Lloyd

Special Invitation

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

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
37th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 23-29, 2012.*

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

*Special week-long evening series by Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) —
"In the Beginning, God Created"*

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

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

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

MARCH 2012

- 3 Brantford, ON** Senior CYC Gathering and basketball challenge with Bro. Daniel Cadieux (Mississauga West, ON): "Elisha: Power is Salvation." See www.brantfordcyc.com.
- 10-11 Echo Lake, NJ** Spring Study Weekend. Speaker: Bro Ron Kidd (London, ON). The theme will be "As it was in the days of Noah".
- 10-11 Paris Avenue, OH** Study Weekend. Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON) speaking on the topic "Nehemiah — Building God's Wall, Building Godly Character."
- 24 Victoria, BC** Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Book Road, ON) on "Lessons From The Sower" Contact Clyde Snobelen at csnobelen@csll.ca.
- 30-April 1 Men in the Truth Camping Weekend** at Lake Cachuma, CA. "How to be a Man of Courage" Leading your wife, disciplining your children, strengthening the brotherhood, and preaching to the world, when you'd really rather sit back and let someone else do it. Contact: Bro. David Lloyd davidrloyd@earthlink.net 818-352-6486.
- 31-April 1 Boston, MA** 21st Annual Spring Study Weekend. Boston Ecclesia, 48 Freeman Street, Stoughton, MA. Bro. Jason Cicero (Meriden, CT): "Stand Fast in the Liberty of the Gospel" — A Study of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Registration and coffee at 1:30PM Saturday. Classes begin at 2:00PM with three classes in the afternoon followed by dinner (provided), then one class on Sunday morning at 9:30AM followed by Memorial Service. Contact Bro. Jim Sullivan at 781-837-8865 or jimsulliv@aol.com.

APRIL 2012

- 6-9 Guyana Bible School** Eccles Hall. Speakers Bre. Clive Drepaul (New York) and Ian Neblett (Panama). Contact Bro. David Andrews bryannevis@hotmail.com.
- 6-8 Pacific Northwest CYC Easter Conference** at Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake BC. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON) will lead the classes. Contact Bro. Dave Higgs daveandkess@gmail.com.
- 6-8 Toronto, ON** Fraternal Gathering at Silverthorn Collegiate, 291 Mill Rd., Toronto, ON. Speaker is Bro. Mark Vincent (UK). Contact: Bro. Peter Dulis pdulis@rogers.com.
- 7 New England Little Disciples Gathering** at Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA. A day of Bible study and activities for children Pre-K to 7th Grade. See our website www.nelittledisciples.com or contact Sis. Tammy Rundle nelittledisciples@hotmail.com or 781-829-4410.
- 7-8 New Westminster, BC** Fraternal Gathering. Theme: "The Empty Chair — 2 Corinthians". Bro. Horace ("Mac") MacPherson (Victoria, BC) is to lead the sessions.
- 8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference**, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

21-22 Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study day at Washington Christadelphian Ecclesia, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD. Speaker Bro. Nigel Small (Echo Lake, NJ): "Joseph — Saviour of the World". Study day, Sat. begins at 1pm. Gathering, Sun. begins at 10:30am. Contact Bro. Bob Kling 301-498-5245 or rkling@acm.org.

21-22 Sussex, NB, Spring study weekend. Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of Hosea.

21 The Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network's Annual Seminar "Faith Challenges: Caring Strategies for our Spiritual Life". Speaker: Bro Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Site: Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, Ontario.

MAY 2012

11-13 Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend, endorsed by the Nanaimo Ecclesia. The location is Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, B.C. on Vancouver Island. The study leader is Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): "You Faithful Women of the Last Days". (Non refundable deposit required by April 1, 2012.) Further details contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8, or email yvonne2001@shaw.ca.

18-20 Sussex, NB Sussex Youth Camp. Speaker: Bro. John Perks (Ottawa): "Man's wisdom vs God's wisdom". To register contact Sis. Marie Baines, pandm6@hotmail.com or 140 Bryant Drive, Sussex, NB, E4E 5M9, Canada with a \$25.00 deposit check.

19-20 Prince George, BC Fraternal Gathering. Speaker: Bro. David Lloyd (Los Angeles Hispanic, CA). Theme: "Spiritual Muscle for Five Big Mistakes". Contact: Bro. Rod Massey 1masseyrd@gmail.com.

26 Ottawa, ON Eastern Ontario Study Day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "Early Genesis: the Forest, the Trees, the Weeds, the Deeds". Contact Sis. Ethel Archard elpis@sympatico.ca.

JUNE 2012

2-3 NY Fraternal Gathering at the South Ozone Park Hall, NY. Bro. John Pople has agreed to speak on Solomon and Delilah. Contact: Bro. Ben Drepaul yerubbaal@yahoo.com or (718) 847-9638.

8-10 New York Sisters' Retreat at The Inn, Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Teacher: Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO) : "Problems and Prayers". Registration deadline is April 15. Space is limited register early with 50% deposit. Entire weekend cost: Single \$376, Dbl \$288, Trp \$258 per person. Make check payable to "New York Christadelphian". Mail to Sis. Averil Ferguson, 814A Tilden Street # 5B, Bronx, New York, 10467. Contact Sis. Averil Ferguson (718) 881-8705 or email averilpsm23@juno.com.

24-30 California Christadelphian Kids Camp. Children 9-16. Teachers are Bro. Jim Cowie (AUS) and Bro. Dev Ramcharran (ON). Our theme is "Elisha". Cost is \$125 before Feb. 29, and \$150 afterwards. Register at www.kidscampcalifornia.com. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com.

30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. Theme "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23). Youth theme "I will Praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "The Lord Raised up Judges" (adults) and "Paul's Powerful Preaching" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord" (adults) and "What would you do?" (teens); Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury Adelaide, South Australia): "Epistle to James — Be Ye Doers of the Word" (adults) and "How

judge ye? — Case studies based on Law of Moses" (teens). Information on website www.christadelphians.net/MACBS.

JULY 2012

1-7 California Youth Conference at Ojai, CA. An exciting week long of study and fellowship for ages 17 (or baptized) and up. The theme is Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians. The speaker will be Bro. Jim Cowie. Contact www.youthconferencecalifornia.com or Bro. Jason Hensley jason@speakingofhisglory.com.

8-14 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner University, Kerrville, Texas. The teachers are Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA, USA): "Scriptural Discipline" adults and "The Fundamentals of Bible Prophecy" teens; Bro. Stephen Mansfield (Golden Grove, Adelaide, AU): "1 Corinthians" adults, and "Ephesians" teens; Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AU): "The Power of Prayer" adults, and "How Judge Ye" teens. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland Shannonjeh@att.net. Reg. forms will be on our site soon: <http://www.planofgod.org/swcbs/swcbs.htm>

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

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

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

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

28-Aug 4 Christadelphian Bible Camp, Manitoulin Island. The theme is "Be ye Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind" The speakers will be Bro. Con Mitsos (Woodville, South Australia) on the subject "Josiah The Great Reformer" and Bro. Roger Long (Grosvenor Rd, Coventry, UK) on the subject "From Upper Room to Resurrection". More details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or 1-416-284-0290.

29- Aug 4 Rogue River Bible School at Union Creek, OR. Speakers are Bro. Steve Mansfield: "Peter, The Fragile Stone that Became an Immovable Rock"; Bro. David Jennings: "Scriptural Discipline"; Bro. Jim Cowie: "The Prophecy of Zephaniah". Contact: Sis. Liz Posey RobandLizPosey@gmail.com

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

AUGUST 2012

11-17 Niagara Falls Bible School. Theme: "Whatever you do — Work as unto the Lord". Contact Bruce and Barb Abel at 519-925-5297 or at bnb69abel@hotmail.ca.

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

25-31 Vancouver Island Bible Camp at Camp Pringle on beautiful Shawnigan Lake. Speakers are Bro. Ron Hicks (USA): "Ezekiel — Son of Man"; Bro. Ian Dangerfield (AUS): "Crucified and Risen with Christ"; Bro. Nathan Badger (ON): "Micah — To do Justly, To love Mercy, and To Walk Humbly Before your God". Contact information (Sis) Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9V 1A8, Canada. Phone: 250 758-4569. Email: yvonne2001@shaw.ca. Website: www.vibiblecamp.com.

SEPTEMBER 2012

9-14 Adult Study Week at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Ballinafad. The week consists of daily interactive Bible Study, taken from the The Last Week of Christ's Life. Workbooks will be available. Participants may use their own camping equipment, or the covered wagons on site. There are also motels available nearby. The facilities used are provided by Sis. Annette Milne. All meals will be provided. Contact Bro Jack Robinson jcrobins@worldchat.com or Bro. Peter Stonell peter.maggiestonell@gmail.com.

15-16 Paris Avenue, OH Fall Study weekend. Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW AUS) will be speaking on "The Return of Christ".

OCTOBER 2012

6-7 Atlanta Area, GA Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON).

6-7 Sussex, NB Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD).

6-7 Washington, DC Music related study weekend led by Bro. Philip Munday.

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of the Kingdom of God

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May, 2012

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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"Get up!"

*I saw an expert skater once, performing on the ice,
and wondered how she learned to glide so gracefully and nice.
I asked her how she got her skill. She first began to frown,
Then smiled and said, "Why, I got up each time that I fell down."*

*I knew a great financier, whose riches were untold.
I marveled at his mighty nerve in taking chances bold.
Once, when we were alone, I asked the rich man of the town
The secret, and his answer was, "Get up whenever you fall down."*

*I heard a famous orator, whose ringing voice brought cheers,
And then, in soft and touching tones, evoked a flood of tears.
I asked this great man privately how I might win renown,
And, like the rest, he told me to get up when I fall down.*

*"He is a genius" is a phrase you often read and hear.
It means a man who plugs along with nerve to persevere.
You may be awkward at the start, and act just like a clown,
But if you want to win life's race, "Get up when you fall down!"*

Unknown

Editorial

Yahweh or LORD

“And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha” (Rom 9:29).

Yahweh

Yahweh, the memorial name of God is nowhere to be found in the KJV of the Bible, although an old form, Jehovah, is to be found four times. In this, the vast majority of modern translations follow the same pattern: neither Jehovah nor Yahweh is to be found in the NIV, RSV, or ESV. However, almost all Christadelphians are very familiar with the term, because its use is very common in our community. This has been true from the earliest days. Starting in 1859, John Thomas wrote a series of articles which were later published as his study on God manifestation, *Phanerosis*. And on many occasions since then the meaning of the term, and its significance, has been expounded.

I do not intend to repeat this type of exposition, but the use of the term in our community. It has become common — almost universal in some ecclesias — for brethren when reading the Old Testament to substitute Yahweh wherever LORD occurs in the Old Testament

LORD

The memorial name of God customarily appears in the English versions as LORD. In the Hebrew the word behind this term is normally¹ originally represented by four consonants, YHWH, the “Tetragrammaton”. Very few vowels were included in the original text: the knowledge of pronunciation was passed on by tradition. Sometime around the sixth or seventh century A.D., a written vowel system was introduced known as the Masoretic System of Points (from the word “Massora” which means “tradition”). The consonantal text remained unchanged and the new vowel signs were not placed among the consonants but as tiny dots and dashes below or above them.

The Divine name presented a problem to the Masoretes because the Jews had for a long time regarded it with such awe that they would not utter it. So no one was absolutely certain how it should be pronounced and therefore what the original vowel sounds were. Nor did they wish that anyone should utter it. So they compromised by placing in the text the vowels of the Hebrew word Adonay with the consonants YHWH. Adonay is the word represented in the A.V. by “Lord” (‘ord’ in lowercase). The first “a” in Adonay is in Hebrew an “indistinct” vowel so we can see how the combination of YHWY consonants and Adonay vowels produced YeHoWaH or Jehovah. In their reading of the Scriptures to this day Jews still say the whole word Adonay when Yehowah appears in the text. Many scholars believe that the original pronunciation of YHWH was Yahweh, but this is by no means certain.

In the New Testament, in quotations from the Old, the Hebrew YHWH is invariably rendered as Kyrios, which perhaps indicates, through divine inspiration, a tradition established very early. Interestingly, in both Rom 9:29 and James 5:4, we have the term sabaoth, which in Romans is a translation of Isa 1:9, where the Hebrew is Yahweh Sabaoth (Lord of Hosts). So although Yahweh is translated by Kyrios, Greek for Lord, the Hebrew term Sabaoth is transliterated.

It might also be mentioned that in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament common in the first century, the word “Yahweh” nowhere occurs. Some have argued that this is because of early Christian influence, although there is no direct evidence of this I can see. So, for whatever reason, the early Christian Church never used the term “Yahweh”, preferring instead the Greek translation.

John Thomas never used the term Yahweh until he started studying the Divine Name in detail in 1859, when he commenced a series of articles entitled “The Mosaic and Nazarene Teaching Concerning God”, later issued as “Phanerosis”. Instead he had used “Jehovah”, starting from his earliest writings in 1834.

Present Day

Ever since I was baptized, I have heard many valuable expositions on the Divine Name, and indeed you can find well over 5,000 uses of the term in *The Christadelphian*, with no year missing at least one reference. Fifty years of *The Tidings* gives similar results, with well over 1,000 references. So the knowledge and awareness of the meaning of the Divine Name has been emphasized in our community since before the name “Christadelphian” was in use. But it was only in the late 1960’s that I remember first hearing the term used while reading the Old Testament. There was a great wave of enthusiasm that swept the UK at the time for the practice. I remember I had bought a copy of The Jerusalem Bible, mainly because as a Catholic Bible it contained the Apocrypha, which I was looking into at the time. But many noted quite approvingly of the fact that it often used the term “Yahweh” in the Old Testament. And thus the practice spread, with sometimes unfortunate consequences, at least in the UK.

By the late 1970’s, there were several ecclesias that had separated over this practice, some holding we ought to read the KJV as written, some holding that, out of respect for our Heavenly Father, we ought to use “Yahweh” for “LORD” where it occurs in the Old Testament. This area of dispute seems to have died down, but the tensions still survive. And in North America, a country now somewhat more traditional in Christadelphian ways than the UK, I would suspect that at least half the brethren will substitute “Yahweh” for LORD while reading the Old Testament and some will substitute “ecclesia” for church.

Yahweh

There are some quite powerful arguments for substituting Yahweh for LORD.

- Yahweh desires that all people “*know that his Name is LORD (Yahweh)*” (Jer 16:21), and we are privileged to have that great opportunity.
- The Name “Yahweh” is expressive of His purpose achieved through Jesus Christ. It means, at least in part, “He who will be manifested,” and thus ex-

presses the divine intention to recreate Himself in those who are 'like Him'.

- It is the importance and deep significance of the Name that delights those who so understand it, and who honor it in expression. It is the Name by which He has made Himself known in the original Scriptures.
- With the proliferation of so-called religions in our midst, it is important that we recognize that there is only one true god, who only is the creator of all things, and who has made known to us his name.

There are those who point out other aspects of this discussion:

- Neither in any manuscript of the New Testament, nor in the Greek version of the Old Testament, is there any hint of the use of the Hebrew name of our Heavenly Father.
- The reason for this has been much discussed. Whether the Greek speaking Christians, the majority audience of the New Testament, would not understand the meaning of the transliteration, or that the minority Jewish Christians would be offended, are only two of the many suggestions.
- It is only in the last generation of Christadelphians that this custom has arisen.
- The consistent advice of both *The Christadelphian* and *The Tidings* has been to counsel against insistence on the practice of substituting Yahweh for LORD in reading the Old Testament.
- All recognize the importance of emphasizing the vital importance of understanding the significance of the divine name, but this does not mean we should use the term is reading our modern translation of the Bible.

Conclusion

The arguments for and against the substituting Yahweh for LORD are, I believe, a matter of personal opinion. No-one would find any problem with emphasizing the meaning of the term LORD in expounding from the Old Testament, or in substituting Yahweh for LORD during such an exposition. And I have no problems with brethren who fell impelled to substitute the term when reading from the Bible at Memorial Service or during a Bible class. But I have concerns in two areas

- When we imply or state that those who do not follow the practice are in some way incorrect.
- When we follow the same practice when speaking to strangers, who know nothing of the background. So doing would tend to leave the impression of a cult, not a Bible-loving community.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. In fact, 47 times in the KJV the Hebrew term translated by LORD is not Yahweh but YAH, as can be seen in the KJV at Psa 68:4, the only time it is transliterated as Jah. And four times we see Jehovah as a transliteration of YHWH. An interesting verse is Isa 26:4, where we have LORD Jehovah in the KJV, Hebrew Yah Yahweh.

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

Exhortation

Eden

The Rivers of Eden

The early chapters of Genesis tell us how the world got to be the way it is. And woven into the accounts of God's creative work are details that may strike us as odd. When the Spirit takes up five verses of this tight narrative to tell us about what happened to the river after it left the garden, it may be useful to ask: Why do we need to know this?

Of course, the obvious answer is, so we can know where the garden was. However, I have seen several different analyses of this question based on the four rivers listed in Genesis 2, with basically three different conclusions: the garden was in (pick one), the Tigris-Euphrates delta in lower Babylonia, the highlands of central Turkey where the Tigris and Euphrates headwaters are very close, or even Jerusalem. There has been so much written on this subject with so little satisfying evidence that I think it's not really a useful question at this point. By way of illustrating the difficulty I'll just observe that the Genesis account describes the river dividing into four courses downstream of the garden. This is the kind of thing that happens in a river delta: the Nile delta is famous for its "seven streams", and the Tigris-Euphrates delta has similar features. But one of the four rivers, Hiddekel, is mentioned in relation to Assyria, which is far north of the delta. I think we have lost too much information over the centuries to understand this passage in a geographical sense. Nor do I believe the Scripture would have given so much space to this matter if it were simply about location.

So let's look at this passage from a different angle. What is described in Genesis 2 is, first of all, a river to water the garden: let us understand clearly that the purpose of the river is to water the garden. It is the provision of God, given to ensure that everything in the garden would live and thrive under the man's care. So, then, why do we need to know what happened to this river after it left the garden?

God who set up the garden also is the creator of the whole earth. He established the garden as a place for the man, who He created for dominion over the whole earth. The garden was not an end in itself: the careful description of the four rivers reminds us that the rest of God's creation also needed water. By His provision there was one source of water for the garden; it was more than adequate for the garden itself, so what remained watered a great portion of the land outside the garden.

In this great excess of God's provision were lessons for Adam as well as for us. First, God's provision for Adam and for the garden far exceeded anything needed for the purpose: He is not stingy provider, nor inclined to short-change us in our needs. Second, His generosity is not limited to those who are in His special care: *"the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"* (Matt 15:27 NKJV). So the river, when it had done its job watering the garden, was given to the lands

outside the garden, to bring life there as well. The presence of the garden was of benefit to the parts of the world nearby, since the overflow of God's blessing fell on them. Third, Adam, looking out from the garden, would see a world not yet under his dominion, but fertile and promising: a world with dangers, a world untamed, but not lifeless or unrelentingly hostile. These same parts of the world were kept ready by God's blessing for the dominion of man, the more easily to be incorporated into the garden since they were already watered and fertile.

Expanding that last thought a bit, consider what Adam's role was in the garden. His assignment was "to tend and keep it." This too was of God's provision. And, as the man's abilities grew, he too would find he could do more than what God had told him to do: he could extend his care to the well-watered lands outside the garden. He was not assigned to do this, not directly, but if he knew of the four rivers, he would certainly understand the lesson: God does more than he really has to do; and He means for us to be like Him. And He meant from the beginning that man's dominion should extend over the whole of the earth. So the four rivers pointed in the direction man might follow, caring for a portion of the earth outside the garden.

One reason to think this is a good way to understand the passage is the mention of the treasures of Havilah. This appears to be a reference to the land later called Arabia. No one seems to know what bdellium is, but gold and onyx are used in the High Priest's vestments. That is, elements useful for the service of Yahweh. It is these that would come under the dominion of Adam were he to extend his care to the lands watered by the four rivers. That is, there are good things, things suitable for the service of God, outside the garden.

Adam was commanded to take care of the garden; and it would have been wrong for him to leave that task undone while seeking further dominion. But the divine commentary shows the potential advantage in expanding the garden when he should be able to do so. Again, there is nothing in Genesis 2 that directs Adam to do any such thing; but it does seem implicit in the record and in the overall purpose of God in making man.

The pattern we have seen is consistent with God's later revelation. In the Bible we see many instances of God's provision for His special people or their special place overflowing to the benefit of the world outside.

Rivers as Symbols

To use the symbol, in the days of Moses the river of the garden flowed with deliverance when God led His people out of Egypt: It flowed also to a mixed multitude of people who came with them.

In the days of Joshua the son of Nun, the river of the garden flowed with promises fulfilled for God's people: It flowed also to Rahab, who received her promise from the two spies, and to the Gibeonites, who won a promise by deceit.

The river of the garden flowed with redemption in the days of Boaz, the son of Salm-
on; it did not stop at the borders of the holy people, but went out also to redeem Ruth.

In the days of our Lord, the river flowed with the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It flowed first with the preaching of one man, then with 12, then with 70. It flowed through Galilee, then Judea; and it was not unknown outside those territories. The Syro-Phoenician woman came to him, the Roman centurion came to him, and certain Greek pilgrims approached his disciples at the end. The river flowed more abundantly after his resurrection, when 3000 answered the call to salvation in one day. It dispersed abroad, bringing life to the world. It gushed forth in Samaria, broke through in the household of Cornelius, and overflowed all its banks in the preaching of Paul and Barnabas and Silas.

The effect of this surplus of God's provision has been, time and again, not only to nourish and strengthen the garden, but to expand it by calling out of the nations people who would join themselves to the name of Yahweh. But there is more.

In the days of Jonah, the river of God flowed repentance and mercy for the people of Israel, but they did not respond. It flowed also to the men of Nineveh, who did respond and were spared. So the lands downstream can benefit from the provision of God even when the keepers of the garden do not. This happened again when the Jewish nation turned away the gospel of the kingdom: the river flowed on, and divided to all the gentiles as at this day. And it is certain that even where the gospel is poorly understood and the Father's will not obeyed, even in those wild lands outside the garden, the river has brought fertility and prosperity.

But the Jews, to whom the gospel came first, sought to dam up the flow — and they have as a result been left desolate, a desert. The prophets are emphatic in declaring Israel will be restored, that all her streams will be filled once more with the blessings of her God. In the kingdom, in the day when the gospel of the kingdom is fulfilled, Israel will once more be the garden of God.

No longer will Adam tend that garden, but the last Adam — a life-giving spirit. The river will flow out from below his throne. Zechariah says half the water will flow westward to the Mediterranean Sea and half will flow eastward to the Dead Sea; Ezekiel says it will render the Dead Sea a living sea, where fishermen will take their catch. And as true as this may be in the literal sense, surely it foretells the spirit of the day when the prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled.

"Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise" (Isa 43:18-21).

This is the time He foretells, when God will provide once more the waters of life for His people; and He will provide in such abundance that the wild animals of the desert can share in it. And of course, following the figure, all the Gentiles will enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom. The effect of this provision of God is declared very plainly by Ezekiel:

“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.” Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it’ ” (Ezek. 36:33-36).

Remember the people I mentioned earlier: the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with Moses, Rahab and the Gibeonites, and Ruth. In all these instances, people who were not part of the holy nation responded to the blessings they found flowing out of Eden. They looked upstream, as it were, to find God the source, and joined themselves to Israel. Micah foretells a time when this will be widely practiced:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem’ ” (Mic 4:1-2).

All this we have to cheer us as we look forward to the Lord’s coming. Until that day we continue under his care, sustained by the same gospel of the kingdom, by the same instruction in the ways of God that he taught so long ago, and by this remembrance in bread and wine. This is more than a meager sustenance: even today the river flows through this place with such depth and volume as to make this garden fertile and beautiful under the care of our Lord the gardener; and surely our God even today provides so much more than is needed here, to bless our neighbors and our communities around us. Let the gospel go forth liberally as we have been blessed; and pray for our neighbors that they also might recognize the blessings of that river and look upstream to find its source, our Father, and to become part of His garden.

Jim Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

It might help us to remember that the ones who sigh, and whose hearts melt, and who faint at the thought of the coming events are those who do not have God. So when we ourselves find our own lives hit this level of depression, we need to pull ourselves up in the knowledge that God loves us and desires that we share in eternity. It is those who have forgotten this who sigh and faint (Isa 13:7; Nah 2:10).

Peter Cresswell

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

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel:

(6) The Early and the Later Rains (Part 2)

Our previous commentary highlighted the spiritual theme of water being the word of God. Just as there are many physical conditions of water (rain, clouds, ice, snow, rivers, oceans, fresh, brackish, etc.) so there are variations in the application of the word of God. Examples would be the spoken word of God (creation), the written word of God (Bible), the word made flesh (Christ), the word in judgment and the word exercised in power. We have chosen to focus our initial consideration of how the features of creation demonstrate divine truths and principles, by examining the law of the early and the latter rains. This law is presented as a key component of the careful geographical design of the Promised Land.

The rain law

Egyptian crops were watered by irrigation ditches. However, Israel's fruitfulness was dependent upon rain, just as Israel's spiritual fruitfulness was dependent upon accepting and processing the rain-like word of God.

"But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you" (Deut 11:11-17).

Yahweh emphasized a direct connection between receiving the blessing of the first rain and the latter rain to Israel's responsiveness exclusively to God's word.

The heaven and earth witnesses

Interestingly, God invokes the two witnesses that He had appointed to be the ones to first 'put their hands' against the accused. This would be heaven and earth. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day" (Deut 4:26). "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death" (Deut 17:6-7). If Israel did not maintain

the word of God nationally then the hands of the two appointed witnesses (heaven and earth) would be the first against the accused. The early and latter rains would be withheld and the land would not yield its fruit and they would perish from the previously good land the Creator had given them.

The three early rains and the three latter rains

The bond between the early and the latter rains and the word of God extends through the divine plan in practice and prophecy. Just as there are three components to the molecular construction of water (H₂O), so there were three applications of the word of God poured out as the early rains. This took place two 'divine' days ago (2 millenniums, Psa 90:4; 2Pet 3:8) and the same three applications of God's word will be poured out as the latter rains in the very near future (the third divine day). These three 'word of God subdivisions' qualifying as the early and latter rains are (1) the spoken word of God (New Testament), (2) the word made flesh (Christ) and (3) the word in power (Holy Spirit gifts). The time between these early and latter outpourings is prophetically defined as a drought of the word of God, in perfect compliance with this Scriptural/creational pattern.

The early and latter rains of the word made flesh

This time frame between the early and latter rains is identified by Hosea.

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth (Hos. 6:1-3).

The reviving and living after two days refers to the resurrection about 2,000 years after the ascension of our Messiah (after two days). We are told Yahweh would come to us as the rain, as the former and latter rain upon the earth. We are the 'earth' in this prophecy, as that is our composition. Adam was made of dirt. We are dust and to dust we shall return. Yahweh came to the enlightened through His son as the early rains, the planting rain. He will come again through Christ as the latter rain, the harvest rain. This is exactly what we were told to expect. James confirms this parallel in his exhortation for our faithful patience. *"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7).* Solomon employs a similar expression concerning the King's son. *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Psa 72:6-7).* Our Messiah will come down on the "mown" grass, referring to how Christ will circumcise the hearts of mankind by the educating fear of God by wielding the sword out of his mouth (commanding earthquakes, volcanoes, panic, flooding, etc). The fact that all flesh is grass was the testimony of John the Baptist as well as Peter (Isa 40:3-6; 1Pet 1:24).

The early and latter rains of the power of the word

We find the same early and latter rain context concerning the promise of the Holy Spirit gifts. Peter explains the miraculous multilingual gift at Pentacost (the Feast of the Firstfruits) by quoting Joel 2. In the context of the divine promise to pour His Spirit upon the sons and daughters of Israel is this phrase: *“rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain”* (Joel 2:23).

The drought of the word separating early from latter

There has to be an absence of rain between the early rains and the latter rains, to distinguish their early and latter status. The early rains mark the period at the beginning of the Ecclesial Age when Christ (the word made flesh) was commissioned by heaven, when the New Testament was written over a single generation and the Holy Spirit gifts were available for the two generations that Peter referenced in his promise (*unto you and your children... Acts 2:38-39*). Then the rains stopped. Christ left in a cloud to go to his Father, just like the natural/creational process of evaporation that replenishes the clouds. John's visions recorded in Revelation completed the written word of God. The Holy Spirit gifts only lasted for two generations, concluded by the unavailability of the Apostles hands and by the replacement of that which was perfect, the completed Bible (1Cor 13:8-10). The latter rains will come when Christ returns, when God ends His self-imposed silence and the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit is showered once more on men. The timeframe between the early and the latter rains is therefore prophesied as a drought of the word of God. *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”* (Amos 8:11).¹ Micah confirms this period of divine silence (Micah 3:6-7) when the sun would go down on the prophets, when there would be no answer from God.

We can identify the time when the latter rains will fall from the clouds of the divine presence, with power and glory. We are told when our Creator will end His self-imposed silence. In the context of a very clear prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom Isaiah tells us: *“The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once”* (Isa 42:13-14). The latter rains of the spoken word of God, the word made flesh and the word in power (reflecting the three component molecular structure of water) will pour from heaven when our Heavenly Father dramatically ends His silence at the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom Age (the third ‘day’)... in the same manner as the early rains escorted the Ecclesial Age into the divine plan two ‘divine days’ ago

In our next commentary we will examine the application of the clouds in the context of divine communication patterns. This creation/spiritual bridge will offer greater understanding about the Day of Atonement, the transfiguration on the mount, being caught up in the clouds of heaven at the return of Christ, and the great cloud of witnesses encompassing us.

Notes:

1. Of course, another fulfillment of this prophesy is the silence of the word of God between the close of the Old Testament and the first coming of our Savior.

Bible Study

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis (5) Consequences, Not Punishment

In the judgment narrative of Gen 3:14-19, God dismisses the serpent first, without questioning. The serpent is amoral and has no part in the trial. Its silence here reinforces the notion that it was primarily a representation of Eve's thinking. However, the judgment on the serpent, that Eve's seed would crush its head, gives the first clue to Adam and Eve, even before God speaks to them directly, that they will not die on this day. They will live to produce at least the offspring to fulfill the prophecy. So Adam and Eve cling to the hope that they will have at least one succeeding generation, awaiting what God will say to them. God first speaks to Eve, then Adam, and finally adds a summary declaration addressing the situation that their misbehavior has caused.

Their continued life implies the abrogation of *"in the day you eat of it you shall surely die."* As obvious as it is to us, I don't think it was at all obvious to Adam and Eve that they wouldn't die that day, until God spoke to the serpent concerning their respective seeds. How do we then read 3:16-19? Are these particulars some kind of substitute for, or application, of the death sentence of 2:17? Are they some kind of gradual death? God does say to Adam that he will return to the dust. Do these travails constitute a carrying out of the death sentence?

By no means. Instead, there's an important frame shift: the details of God's proclamations to Eve and then to Adam are consequences, not punishment. They do not in any way fulfill God's stated punishment for their transgression; that would have been death. They live, but they live with consequences.

When God gave Adam and Eve the opportunity, they confessed, and God accepted their confession. Now add the idea of consequences. Even though God forgave them, transgression inevitably brings consequences. The details of Eve and Adam's ensuing lives do not answer to the sentence of death stated in 2:17. If that were so, their confession availed nothing. That is, if 3:16-19 is an expansion or fulfillment of 2:17, then Adam and Eve's confession meant nothing to God, for he meted out the same sentence anyway.

God pardons the sinners; as far as east is from west He puts away the iniquity of their sin. I find it beyond any argument that the initial episode of human transgression would lack the accompanying grace of God, and this must in turn be occasioned by a true repentance. Nonetheless, the consequences of their sin abide.

The concept of consequences

Suppose a husband commits the sin of adultery by having an affair. He has done something monstrously evil. He can repent, and his wife can forgive him. This will begin to heal the breach, but the trust between them has been shattered. Untrustworthy behavior destroys trust; this is a natural consequence of extra-marital affairs, and a major issue in the restoration of the marital bond.¹

Another example of having to live with the consequences of sin would be someone who abuses their body. If you are a drug user, you can repent, go clean, and pray for forgiveness. God will forgive you. However, you may have done permanent harm to your mental and physical health.

Biblical examples

The Bible has many examples of people who sinned, who were forgiven, and who nonetheless had to deal with the consequences of their misdeeds. The Apostle Paul recognized his forgiveness in Christ from his evil ways as a Pharisee and persecutor (Acts 22:19-20, 26: 9-11, 1Tim 1:13-14). Nonetheless, he seems to have carried an emotional burden of his past deeds (note present tense “am” used with “sinner” in 1Tim 1:15). The Samaritan woman (John 4) whom Jesus met and spoke with at Jacob’s well believed in his testimony (John 4:39-42), but she still had a complex and unsavory past, with multiple marriages. She had to live with whatever webs she had become entangled in. And what of the men at the cross for whom Jesus appealed, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34)? If any of the people directly or indirectly responsible for the crucifixion later came to believe in Jesus, certainly they would obtain forgiveness, but would still live with a heavy conscience for what they had done to the Son of God.

The most extensive and instructive Bible case of consequences comes in the life of David. After Nathan the prophet rebuked him for his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah her husband, Nathan announced (2Sam 12:10-12) to the rueful king that the sword would not depart from his house, that evil would rise against him from his own house, and that the child born to Bathsheba would “*surely die*” (same construction as in Gen 2:17).

David confessed, and God forgave him, but this did not cancel the prophecies of evil. David’s sin carried the natural consequences of family strife. He had blown apart Uriah’s family, and now, with Bathsheba added to his family, the inevitable strife ensued among his offspring. Besides Bathsheba’s infant who died, Amnon, Adonijah, and Absalom all were involved in family strife and also met untimely deaths. Bathsheba still bore the designation “*Uriah’s wife*” (2Sam 12:15) until after the child died and David completed his ceremonial and heartfelt repentance; then “*David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon*” (2Sam 12:24 RSV). God accorded David the privilege of having Bathsheba as his wife and the two of them bore Solomon, but the consequences of his sins, notably the rivalry between Solomon and Adonijah, and between Absalom and Amnon, plagued the house of David all the rest of his years.

God forgives, but we must live with the consequences of our choices.

God's abiding purpose with eve and adam

How do the particulars of verses 16-19 constitute consequences if they are not punishment? To get a satisfactory answer we need to ask another question: "What was God's purpose with Adam and Eve?" The key idea here is that God's purpose for Adam and Eve remained the same after they transgressed.

What did God intend for them when He created them male and female and placed them in the garden to till it and keep it? God wanted them to have a relationship with Him based on their understanding of who they were and who He was. From this they will learn faith, trust, appreciation, and love. Their sin doesn't divert God from this goal. In view of the fact they did think equality with God was a thing to be grasped,² God will now work differently with them. Instead of working primarily through the avenue of blessing to develop appreciation and love for him, God will now figuratively transport them from Gerizim to Ebal (Deut 11:29), and work primarily through hardship to inculcate their dependence on him. The details of verses 16-19 show that much of their new form of life carries over from Eden, but in very different circumstances.

God's purpose with Eve and Adam is the same purpose he has with us: to make disciples, to grow our faith and love, to teach us his absolute sovereignty that we might find our lives in him. We live in the post-Edenic world and have never experienced paradise. God uses both goodness and hardship to develop us.

Similarly, Adam and Eve need development. As a consequence of their disobedience they will not learn these attributes within the blessed confines of Eden. Their transgression doesn't change God's purpose for their lives, but it does change His method of achieving that end. As sinners potentially estranged from fellowship with their creator, they will find their way back through His grace in forgiveness and through the toil of life that will teach them the lesson they failed to learn, their limitations as human beings.

There can be no surer way to make them realize their limits than for God to introduce them to the world of woe.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

**This article is based on Study 40 from Bro. Levin's book
"The Creation Text", available from The Christadelphian Tidings
(http://tidings.org/book_order.htm).**

Notes:

1. In real life, there is no such person as an "innocent party"; marriage problems are systemic and healing goes in both directions. This is just a simplified example.
2. As opposed to the Lord Jesus, who "*did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*" (Phil 2:6 RSV). This section of Philippians has several other allusions to early Genesis. The idea of equality reinforces the notion that equality was knowledge of situational good and evil, because they were supposed to be Godlike in their moral knowledge.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Developing a Sunday School Resource Center

Sunday schools nurture the spiritual growth of our children, and Sunday school teachers devote themselves to the success of the process. A good Sunday school resource center can help both the children and the teachers along the way.

Imagine what it would be like, at the end of a Sunday school lesson, for each child to select a related book or DVD or Bible game to take home and enjoy for a week. Sunday school would no longer be limited to an hour — or less! — on Sunday. It would go home with the child and continue to be his or her companion during the week to come!

Imagine what it would be like for a Sunday school teacher to be able to put his or her hands on a ready-to-use teaching resource or a learning activity that would help bring the week's lesson to life. It would be a boon to many who labor long and hard to teach the children.

These are some of the things that are possible when the Sunday school has a good resource center and everyone is tuned in to using it. It is an idea worth exploring with your Sunday school team, and if you already have a Sunday school resource center this might be a good time to review how it is working and how it can be made better.

Where to begin?

There is an obvious need to be practical and to set priorities in the development of a Sunday school resource center. A good way to start would be to gradually obtain a full range of Christadelphian Sunday school materials that can help teachers prepare week-to-week instruction.

There are several published Christadelphian Sunday school curriculums in use throughout the brotherhood. Among these are the Birmingham Central Sunday School Scheme, the Christadelphian Sunday School Union (CSSU, UK), the Christadelphian Sunday School Union (CSSU, Australia), and the Christadelphian Sunday School Association (CSSA, Australia) curriculums. All of these are comprehensive in the sense that they provide Old and New Testament lessons and a variety of instructional materials for all Sunday school ages, from pre-readers to young adults.

Regardless of the curriculum that your Sunday school uses for its calendar of lessons, ready access to the materials contained in all of these curriculums can be extremely useful for lesson planning purposes. The materials differ; they can meet a variety of teaching and learning needs. Reference copies of every book and activity in every Christadelphian Sunday school curriculum should therefore be near the top of a resource center shopping list.¹

The different curriculums contain from two to five years' worth of lessons, depending on the learning level (usually designated Kindergarten, Primary, etc.). This is actually helpful when it comes to funding a resource center. From a budgeting standpoint, purchase of the curricular materials can be spread out over a period of several years.

In any case, we are looking at a long-range commitment when we talk about developing and funding a Sunday school resource center. The center needs to be an ongoing priority if it is to flourish and fulfill its potential.

What else?

Other kinds of teaching resources can be kept in the center as well. Some are timeless: flannelgraphs, filmstrips, story books, pictures, puzzles, models, and arts and crafts materials. There are song books and collections of skits and plays. There are various kinds of DVDs and CDs and Bible software for computers. The list is almost endless. The key is to plan and prioritize with the needs of the Sunday school in mind. The resource center can also be a place to house a growing collection of ready-to-use Bible learning center activities for teachers to draw on from week to week. (See the February, 2012, Tidings article, "Using Bible Learning Centers".)

And by all means, build an inventory of things for the children to take home and enjoy using during the week.

Practical considerations

We have touched on the need to budget for resource center materials and to spread out the costs over a period of time. Given that ecclesias can often spend thousands of dollars on a single public preaching effort, it is reasonable to think that a well-planned annual budget for the resource center might meet with ecclesial approval, too. Sunday school, in reality, is a preaching mission within the ecclesia.

Housing the resource center is a consideration. If the ecclesia owns its own meeting hall, then a place needs to be found to put up some shelves or add some cabinets, preferably near the Sunday school area. If the ecclesia does not own its own hall, a more creative solution to the housing problem will be necessary, but don't give up on the idea. "Find a way" is always the alternative to the "no way" mindset.

And keep a good inventory of the resources that you have in the center. Know what you have and how to put your hands on everything. Computer spread sheets are a ready-made tool for this kind of housekeeping job. A carefully designed spreadsheet will allow teachers to see at a glance what is available for them to use or for the children to borrow and take home. Setting up and maintaining a database of resource center materials might be just the thing for a couple of older Sunday school students or CYC members to take on if they are looking for a meaningful way to begin serving the ecclesia.

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Notes:

1. Some Christadelphian Sunday school materials are now available online. Please see the websites listed in the March/April, 2012, Sunday school article.

Youth Speaks

The Return of Timothy — 1 Thessalonians 3

A little while ago, I was doing a study on the book of Revelation for a Sunday school mutual improvement class. Unfortunately, the study had become difficult — I was so frustrated, because in order to make heads or tails of the information, I needed to piece so many things from so many different places together! I didn't understand why the answer couldn't just be in one chapter or book; why did the themes bounce from one book to the next and why couldn't the study just be easier, right there in front of me? So, seeking to relieve my frustration, I talked to my father about it — who loves to study prophecy. He told me that if God had put everything in black and white terms and had made study easy, two things would happen. First, we would not have to try at all to figure out what God had in store for us, and we would not have to try and put in any effort to prove our commitment to being a Bible scholar. Our faith is a learning process — you make a mistake, learn from it and hopefully don't do it again. It is something that has to be developed and it *isn't* easy. We have to always be progressing in faith and love for our Heavenly Father and His plan. Second, if God had made His plan so easy to find, even God's enemies would know exactly what they were supposed to do and exactly what God's plan was to combat it — there would be no secrecy at all! The message wouldn't be something special. Thus, through faith and hard work we will be able to understand our purpose and, Lord willing, eternally serve our Father.

But what does this have to do with 1 Thessalonians 3? Well, just like how we have to study and really try to understand prophecy, the same is true for a study of Thessalonians. If we look deeper, in each chapter this book is a little hint or echo of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is always a type or a subtle hint of our Savior. Even if you just took a summary for each chapter, you could see that this is clearly about the return of our long awaited Groom.

As we do this little study, try to keep your mind on the excitement of Christ's return and how it is a reminder of our hope to come. It is very important that we replenish and stimulate our excitement for his coming and see that he is mentioned everywhere throughout God's word.

The sending of Timothy

In this chapter we have a young man sent to the Thessalonian ecclesia to bring tidings of their progress. This chapter can be separated in three sections: verses 1-6 are Timothy's mission, verses 7-10 are Timothy's encouraging report, and verses 11-13 are Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians. First, let's take a look at Timothy in verses one and two:

"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith" (1Thess 3:1-2).

This is the young man that was sent by Paul to the ecclesia to check up on them and bring them encouragement. Now the journey from Athens to Thessalonica was no easy journey to take. But even so, Timothy, just a young man, took on the journey of over 300 miles to bring peace to Paul and to prove himself as a servant of God. At first, these verses would seem fairly self-explanatory — but, as I have often heard, and many of us probably have, “Good Bible study equals good Bible reading. We must apply the facts, establish the principles, and apply the exhortation.” We have to ask questions — and if we don’t, what is the point? We have to engage with this book and try to understand the depth of what it is saying. So, what should we ask about in verse two? Well, there were at least two things which stood out to me in this verse. First, Paul called Timothy a minister and then second, a fellow laborer. This is actually quite significant. The meaning of “minister” is “servant” — it’s the Greek word “*diakonos*”, which literally means “one who waits on tables.” Perhaps this idea of a “servant” makes us think of someone:

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom 15:8).

So, Christ was a “minister” or servant to the “circumcision”, or the Jews, to fulfill the plan and promises that God had made. This is our first echo of Christ — Timothy was sent to be a “servant,” just like Christ was. In addition, “minister” is also linked to an account in 1 Timothy, where it is translated as “deacon”:

*“Likewise **must** the deacons **be** grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being **found** blameless. Even so **must** their wives **be** grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon [to be an attendant, that is to wait upon mentally or as a host, friend or teacher, a “minister unto” — MH] **well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness** [all outspokenness, frankness, bluntness, confidence — MH] **in the faith which is in Christ Jesus”** (1Tim 3:8-13).*

By being this minister, we can see how Timothy was following the example of Christ by how he was a fellow laborer with Paul, and ultimately with Christ and our Heavenly Father. Continuing on in verse two from 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul had sent Timothy to establish the ecclesia and to comfort them in their faith. This word “establish” is “*sterizo*” and conveys the idea of supporting a building or bracing with a buttress. It seems to be the same idea as when Aaron and Hur supported Moses’ arms during the battle with Amalek (Exod 17:12). In other words, Paul wished to strengthen the ecclesia with encouragement from Timothy, and to confirm the new believers in their journey. Literally, Paul and the apostles were set at a sentry post by their commanding officer — the Lord Jesus — “*for the defense of the gospel*” (Phil 1:17) and Paul aimed to keep that post by making sure that the ecclesia had the support that they needed! Paul wanted to make sure

that his work with this ecclesia was not in vain, for he had labored greatly. We see this great labor in verses 4-5:

“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain” (1Thess 3:4-5).

There are so many connections here to Christ and his mission at the second coming! Just as Paul sent Timothy as a “fellow laborer” to give a report of the ecclesia and to give them encouragement, God will do the same with Christ. In fact, the Lord referred to himself as a fellow worker with God. When Christ healed the lame man by the pool called Bethesda on the Sabbath, he had the following discourse with the Jews:

“And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:16-17).

Christ was a fellow laborer with God — when God worked, he worked. Thus, just as Timothy was a fellow laborer with Paul and was sent to the Thessalonian ecclesia, so will the Lord Jesus Christ one day be sent to our ecclesias. There are so many echoes in these verses if we only take the time to look!

Trials and tribulation

Lets turn the tables now and take a look at the more exhortational portion of this chapter. Verse 6-8 speaks about the good report that Timothy delivered to the apostle, and Paul’s reaction to that report:

“But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord” (1Thess 3:6-8).

Just for a minute think about what is being said here. It can be easy to just gloss over these words — that Timothy brought a good report — and keep reading. But think about what this would have meant to Paul. This was a group of people who had been Gentiles, living in the world, and they had completely changed their lives to follow the Truth! Yet despite this and despite all of the problems that they were having from the Jews in Thessalonica, they still kept their faith. Try to think about that situation:

Imagine you’re living in a city or amongst a group of people that does whatever they want, whenever they want — with no idea of the Truth. You lived out your life to the fullest, with no regard to what was right or wrong. You had block parties, barbecues, neighborhood outings, street football games — all of those “good” meaningless things that try fill a gap in your daily life. Then, things started to change. A man came to town and spoke of what God had in store for the human race. This plan wasn’t limited to a specific gender, or class or demographic. It was

for everyone who had an ear to listen to what was being said. He started off by introducing himself as a servant of God. He said things that others called “outlandish gibberish” about the Kingdom of God and your purpose in this life — but it didn’t sound like gibberish to you. Some people, including yourself, listened and become interested. Others simply mocked and persecuted the man. Nevertheless, this man still stood firm and continued preaching this “strange idea.” Finally, he was able to start formal gatherings and created a group of people — an ecclesia — who striving to do the work of the Lord. Needless to say, those who didn’t listen, took every opportunity to prey on those who were converted to the things of the Lord. They said things like “Where have you been, we are having a party over at Big Jinkin’s place tonight — skip that crazy guy’s stuff and have a little fun, it’s been too long.” Something like this was even said to you — but you replied by saying that all that stuff is wrong and you’d rather learn. After that, your old friends became frustrated with you and even started calling others around to poke fun at your new way of life. Not only so, but things had even become physically dangerous (Acts 17:5).

This is what Paul had brought upon these people. But did they falter? No. Instead, they took the remarks and games, like true servants, steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. They had such an amazing mentor — one who had also endured persecution and had even been removed from their city. They understood the reward was far greater than the pain and suffering of what they were enduring. This is a powerful example for us to remember in our times of distress. The Thessalonians were able to take the remarks and the persecution and still remain faithful and strong — and so can we!

Thus, the report which Timothy brought back was very exciting for Paul. He was so glad to hear that the Thessalonian ecclesia was still maintaining their faith and works in the Truth. The news quickly spread, provided ammunition and strength for Paul and other struggling Ecclesias in the area. Before he heard this news, Paul had been going through much tribulation and trials in the faith, and to hear this good news was very uplifting for him and his brothers. We can see Paul’s excitement in verse 9. He cannot thank God enough and is overjoyed with this “gift” of good news:

“For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?” (1Thess 3:9-10).

If there was anything lacking in this ecclesia, Paul wanted to correct it as soon as possible. Even though Timothy did bring such good news, there still were things that needed addressing. It is possible that some of the believers had been led astray by their own weaknesses, and Paul wanted to make sure that these problems were taken care of as soon as possible, in order to ensure that the ecclesia would prosper and grow. Paul probably knew, when he left, that there were still a few things that needed to be worked on but for the most part he was pleased with their progress and steadfast walk.

We have seen echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have seen the willingness of Timothy to serve, we have seen the dedication of the Thessalonians as they sought to cling to the Truth, and now we will close by looking at the beauty of prayer and glory of the coming of Christ. This is the way in which the chapter ends — we have the excitement and uplifting reminder of the coming of Christ which will happen in the last days, ironically in the last verse. Paul and the apostles prayed ever so extensively, asking God for his guidance and strength, not only from themselves but that their work would not be in vain. We can see what a prayer like this might be like at the end of this energizing chapter:

“Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1Thess 3:11-13).

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An Exhortation to Godly Living — 1 Thessalonians 4

The necessity for daily obedience to God

Chapter four of Paul’s first letter to the ecclesia in Thessalonica begins with a sudden change in tone from the preceding chapters.

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1Thess 4:1).

Paul is stressing the importance of daily service and obedience to God in every aspect of one’s life. He understands the dangers of the world that could threaten the new believers in the Truth. The standards and morals that they have been taught — which came from none other than the Lord Jesus Christ through Paul his apostle — are still vulnerable to the attacks from the world of unbelievers that surround them (both Jew and Gentile). The word for beseech here in verse 1 is the Greek word “*erotao*,” which means to ask or intreat. The word is also used in Acts 3:3 (RSV), “*Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he **asked** for alms*”

The word is used there by a beggar begging for alms — a man who was not merely requesting a few extra coins without urgency, but a man who was begging for what he knew to be his only opportunity for survival due to his circumstances. Paul uses this word again

*“Now we **beseech** you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (2Thess 2:1-2).*

In this instance, Paul’s desire is for the believers in Thessalonica not to lose faith, and remain obedient to God. He knew the urgency of this message and it was his desire that his fellow brethren and sisters heed his warning.

As brethren and sisters in the ecclesia we have the same responsibility to those new to the Truth in our ecclesias and surrounding areas that Paul had to the new believers in Thessalonica. If we are not upholding the standards of the Truth in our ecclesia, what will stop the world from creeping in and attacking those newer and possible weaker members in the Truth? Paul recognized this reality and we should likewise do the same.

Flee fornication; sexual purity.

In verse 3, Paul addresses the will of God towards his servants. The Greek word here for “will” is “*thelema*” which means purpose or resolve. This is an active purpose that God has for his servants. God’s purpose encompasses both salvation for mankind (1Tim 2:4) as well as specific and foreknown plans for his individual servants (Rom 1:10, 8:28). Not only is this the will of God but “even your sanctification.” The Greek here for sanctification is “*hagiasmos*” (purification, holiness) and comes from “*hagios*” which refers to the process of **becoming** holy. It is made clear to us here that holiness does not come just by being called to be a part of God’s plan with the earth, but with the accompaniment of effort from the believer.

Paul declares that the will of God is “*that ye should abstain from fornication.*” The Greek word for fornication is “*porneia*” and is the equivalent of the Hebrew “*zanah*” which refers to any licentious or sexual act. It is not enough to be pure in mind only. A pure mind requires a pure body. This is where verse 4 picks up: “*that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel.*” The word here for “vessel” is one that in the figurative sense refers to a person who is being used for a purpose by someone else (Acts 9:15). 1Pet 3:7 tells us that the wife is a “weaker vessel” than the husband. When considering 1Cor 7:2-5, it becomes clear that Paul’s message is that a man is to “possess his vessel (or wife) in sanctification (of himself) and honor (of and for his wife).” Any sexual desire of a man is to be directed towards his wife and no other (and vice versa). That is the standard God set in the beginning (Genesis 2:24) and it is the only acceptable standard. We must not be like the Gentiles who, through their behavior driven by “*the lust of concupiscence*” (verse 5), have separated themselves from God. A similar metaphor is to be found in Prov 5:15-18.

“*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter*” (vs 6) or “that no man **cross his boundary** and **take advantage** of his brother in **the** matter at hand” as the Greek means, because “*the Lord is the avenger of all such.*” Christ at his return will have the divine wisdom and judgment necessary to avenge those who have wronged others by breaking God’s commands (2Thess 1:8 — notice the repeat of the phrase “*them that know not God*”).

It has been suggested by many that this letter was written in Corinth because it was known for its worldly vices; one of the most prominent being those of sexual nature addressed in this chapter. Paul would not have written to the believers in Thessalonica if these vices were not a realistic threat to them. The society surrounding Paul was so bad that many became acclimated to the vicious lifestyle that the citizens lived. Even the brethren and sisters living there would have felt little shock for the moral corruption that surrounded them. How similar is this society

to the one in which surrounds us today! We live in a time when even churches cannot decide what to call right or wrong. Humanism rules society and allows its members to decide on personal rights and wrongs based on their own standards with no regard for God's truth at all. The warning given here by Paul is just as applicable to us believers today as it was to the believers in Thessalonica in Paul's day.

Brotherly love

The believers have been exhorted on daily obedience to God (verses 1-2), purity (verses 3-8), and now brotherly love (verses 9-10). This is fitting, after all, as brotherly love is the foundation by which the believer can achieve a lifestyle of obedience and purity before God. Paul declares (to paraphrase) that the believers *"need not that I write unto you (as touching brotherly love): for ye are taught of God to love one another."* Paul is referring to God's example of love in giving His son as a sacrifice for mankind (1John 4:7-11). We are known as disciples of Christ if we display this love one to another (John 13:35). Paul mentions that the ecclesia in Thessalonica has displayed this love towards the surrounding ecclesias in Macedonia (verses 10 and 1:7,8) and yet he exhorts them to *"increase more and more."* There is always room for improvement by way of brotherly love for the saints in Christ because of the unapproachable example that he set for us. Although we can never be as perfect as the example that Christ has set, we must never stop striving to improve on our efforts.

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1Thess 3:12,13).

Effect on non-believers

The next section of the chapter deals with the lifestyle of the believer. Paul's exhortation is that the believer *"study to be quiet, and to do your own business."* The NIV translates "study" as: "make it your ambition," the RSV reads "aspire" (this word is also used in Rom 15:20 — *"I have strived to preach the gospel"* and 2Cor 5:9 — *"labour that we may be accepted of him"*). It must be our **ambition** to *"lead a quiet life and mind your own business"* (NIV). This is the opposite of the lifestyle of the busybody addressed in 2Thess 3:11. There is no room for busybodies in the ecclesia of God; for those who meddle unnecessarily in ecclesial or personal affairs of others, but only for those who are ambitious to share the Truth.

Paul further exhorts the believers to *"work with your own hands."* This is in reference to physical labor, which was despised by the Greeks as it was regarded as slave work. Paul's attitude is quite the opposite (2:9, 1Cor 4:12, Eph 4:28). The lesson here is that we ought not to adopt the standards of the world, but to live only by God's standards. God's own son, after all, was a manual laborer (Mark 6:3).

"That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." The Greek here is "walk in **good form**" not like those who walk **disorderly** from which we are to withdraw ourselves (2Thess 3:6). Paul is concerned here with the effect that the believers have on the surrounding unbelievers (cp. Col 4:5, 1Tim 3:7).

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:14-15).

“The dead in Christ shall rise”

“But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren:” This is a phrase often used by Paul (Rom 1:13, 11:25, 1Cor 10:1, 12:1, 2Cor 1:8) when his purpose is to correct a fallacy. The attached “brethren” shows Paul’s affection towards those to whom he is writing.

“Concerning them which are asleep,” although Paul is addressing the deceased, they are *“dead in Christ”* (vs16) which makes them so close to life that in God’s eyes they are merely sleeping, awaiting the return of His son. We are not told what question the brethren and sisters in the ecclesia at Thessalonica had that inspired Paul to address this subject, but he gives them explanation and comfort nonetheless.

He begins by encouraging the believers to not sorrow over their dead loved ones as the non-believers do. He reminds them of their belief that God raised Christ himself from the dead and how he will raise those who sleep in Christ as well in vs14 *“even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”* This word “bring” in the Greek means to lead or to bring to the point of destination: that destination being the judgment seat of Christ. Paul’s comfort for the Thessalonians is that no experience of those living during the time of Christ’s return will be withheld from those who are asleep in Christ at his return. He explains that *“the Lord himself”* (that is Christ and none other) *“shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first,”* that is, before those believers who are still alive. They will be *“caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”* (vs 17). The Greek for “caught up” is “harpazo” and signifies to be seized, to be caught away. So the believers will be conveyed from one place to another on the earth (Acts 8:39-40). One possible idea with this word “harpazo” is that there will be an almost instantaneous transport of the saints “in the air” (verse 17) to another place on the earth (the other place being the destination — the judgment seat of Christ).

This chapter concludes on an uplifting and comforting note for the Thessalonian ecclesia: *“so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* Ever with our Lord Jesus Christ on the earth assisting him in his future work of preaching the Truth, judging the nations of the earth, purging the world of any and all sinful things that occupy it so that *“all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD”* (Num 14:21).

“Wherefore,” Paul concludes, *“comfort one another with these words.”* Let us likewise, brethren and sisters, do the same. For we live in a time when we need it more than ever. For:

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly” Rev 22:20

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Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (5) Guideline #4: Having Realistic Expectations

Marriage — a blending

Marriage is not only a union between two people: it is also a blending of two cultures. We may not realize how important this is in establishing a harmonious marriage. It has been said that in the first six months of a marriage the couple will bask in the euphoric afterglow of the honeymoon, but for the rest of their lives together reality will invariably set in. They will need to iron out all the potentially conflicting issues inherited from their upbringing that could tarnish their relationship. These kinks were always there, but generally the excitement of idealized, romantic love had kept them buried during courtship. One of the most important teachings on marriage occurs in the very beginning with the commandment that the Lord God gave to the first married couple, Adam and Eve: *“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).¹ The substance of this teaching is repeated four times in the New Testament (i.e., Matt 19:5, Mark 10:7, 1Cor 6:16 and Eph 5:31) emphasizing the importance that the Word of God attaches to this principle. It should be noted that the principle involved here emphatically doesn’t just apply to the male member of the relationship, as some have claimed, but applies to the female member too. This is true not only implicitly, but also explicitly as demonstrated by the words of the Psalmist David — *“Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father’s house”* (Psa 45:10). There are several critical concepts here, but for the purpose of the present discussion we will focus on the principle that a marriage constitutes a new blended relationship, requiring that the couple establish their own identity independent of the households in which they were raised. This doesn’t mean that the couple forsakes all social interactions with their parents, siblings, other relatives or prior friendships, but it does mean that they don’t let their past adversely interfere, directly or indirectly, with the working out of their new spousal relationship.

What do I mean by expectations acquired from one’s upbringing? Whether we are always cognizant of it or not, our future behavior is always built on our past experience. Sometimes that is very good and at other times it can lead to a great deal of heartache and sorrow. Each partner brings into a marriage a mental model, based on their rearing, of what his or her expectations are for a relationship to function happily. The diversity of relationships in which children are raised these days makes it a great challenge to even begin to define what is a “normal” childhood. This point is emphasized again and again in scholarly studies on marriage. With the divorce rate approaching 50% in North America, many children are brought up in single parent homes. Depending on who gets custody, and how effectively joint child rearing arrangements are shared, a youngster may reach adulthood

with no effective model for being a husband or wife. We could cite many other possible combinations of guardianship arrangements, but even if one grew up in what would nominally be described as a normal home environment, i.e. where one's mother and father were committed to a long-term marriage, potentially conflicting expectations will be implanted. We may feel that our parents raised us in a faultless manner; nevertheless our upbringing could never have been truly perfect — *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23). The challenge is to bring to the new relationship, after leaving father and mother, the best of what we have observed and to discard the rest. Sounds simple — but we will find this is nearly impossible because we don't really have a clue on what is “best” and ought to be retained and what behaviors we grew up with that should be discarded. The only perfect model we will ever have for a relationship is to measure our behavior after the patterns set by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The practical example of affluence

Let's consider an important practical example of bringing unrealistic expectations into a marriage. Suppose one has been brought up in a fairly wealthy home where as a child you were hardly ever denied anything you wished to have. When you became a teenager you had your own credit card(s), a fancy automobile upon obtaining your driver's license, an iPhone, iPad, iPod and an iEverything as soon as they became available. Your closet overflowed with all sorts of garments and your numerous shoe fashions could have filled a railroad car, etc. When such a person marries someone with a less prosperous upbringing it can be extremely hard to match expectations to the reality of what is achievable. It can also work quite the other way around — someone brought up in rather meager circumstances may look at marriage as a road to riches that they were denied as a child, and place expectations on their spouse that cannot possibly be accomplished. Either way it has been found that financial conflicts rank very high among the reasons that married couples eventually split. In a recent survey taken in a cosmopolitan mid-west city money problems outranked infidelity and physical abuse as major causes leading to divorce.² The wedding vow “till death do us part” has become in the thoughts of many couples “till debt do us part”.

Many young people today expect to have immediately available all the accoutrements of life that their parent(s) worked for over an extended lifetime. To be fair to this generation, that is not really a new phenomenon; in a way it is engrained in the culture of America and has spread pretty much around the globe. In my generation, born in the Great Depression, it was not as difficult to expect to do as well as our parents, if not better than. Relating to my own upbringing, my parents did not have very much in the way of material wealth and neither did my grandparents for that matter. How can young couples resolve this problem of wanting and wanting beyond their ability to pay? Time and again I have seen young married couples get into huge credit card debt from spending for a plethora of things they just had to possess. Many years back when Mary and I had our first two children, I took a new job that paid about 50% less than I had been making working for the phone company; then unexpected medical bills hit us very hard. In no time we found ourselves with a large credit card debt that literally could have forced

us into bankruptcy. This had nothing to do with buying luxury items, but rather that we were not insured or prepared from past savings for unexpected medical bills that had arisen, and also from the burden of paying off education debts. We took some drastic measures, chief among them was to cut up all the credit cards and pay only in cash for whatever we needed. Helped by a consolidation loan we dug out of the debt over the next couple of years and never faced that problem again. Admittedly this was a drastic step and I don't recommend it for everyone, but it is something to consider. Another alternative is not to use credit cards at all if possible, to restrict spending to debit cards³ and cash. This way you can only spend what you actually have. We also got into the habit of making sure we only lived on at most 90% of our income (and sometimes even less) and putting that extra 10% (or more when possible) into our savings. This way we would have a cushion in the future to handle unexpected financial issues. Many financial advisors suggest that a couple should have at least enough savings to live for at least six months without external income to cushion against job losses or other possible financial pitfalls.

However, none of this financial advice works if one's desires outstrip the couple's ability to pay. A couple has to be able to wisely appreciate that what one wants is not the same thing as what one needs! It doesn't work if we come into a marriage and are not willing to believe in a vow, that we have taken our partner "for richer or poorer." One would be far better off coming into a marriage with the frame of mind that the Apostle Paul espoused to the Philippians: *"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content"* (Phil 4:11). If we adopt this as our mantra rather than embracing the attitudes fostered by a very materialistic world, we would be better off in our relationships. The Apostle expounds on this point further in his letter to Timothy: *"Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment"* (1Tim 6:6) and *"But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content"* (1Tim 6:8). We can add to this advice by also recalling the words written to the Hebrews: *"Keep your life free from love of money, and content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' "* (Heb 13:5). These Scriptures provide a correct balance for us not to ignore, because the values that the world has for success are "material things" epitomized in the very satirical bumper sticker sometimes observed on very ostentatious luxury cars — "the one with the most toys wins". Wins what? Presumably, the envy of one's neighbors, but surely not the approval of our heavenly Father. The Lord God, on the other hand, values the things of the spirit. If our love for our spouse is predicated on the material wealth they can supply us then we have indeed lost sight of the fruits of the spirit which are: *"...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"* (Gal 5:22-24).

On the practical side, it a good idea for a newly married couple to make out a budget and resolve to stick to it. The United States government may be able to print more money and raise the nation's debt limit to trillions and trillions of dollars, but the rest of us cannot do this if we let our personal finances get out of balance.

It is also wise to assess what things are really necessary at any point in our lives, and what things we think we need, only because advertising aimed at consumer passions has convinced us we ought to buy them. There are also many ways one can stretch a budget by taking advantage of many community resources such as Goodwill stores, Salvation Army resale places and others.⁴ Instead of buying on credit why not budget a need and only purchase it after one has saved the amount needed? And if you do use a credit card, for convenience, resolve to never charge more in any payment period than you can pay in full at the end of the month. This kind of thinking has always been the way our family has functioned since tearing up our credit cards 40 years ago and it has kept us on a sound basis.⁵ Most importantly it is based on sound Scriptural advice: “Owe no one anything” (Rom 13:8), which we would do well to heed.

Next: *Striving to be simpatico.*

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Notes:

1. All references are from the ESV.
2. USA Today, September 28, 2011. Article reported that 40.3% filed for divorce because of objections on “How spouse handles money”, 34% because of infidelity and only 12.7% for physical abuse.
3. They didn’t have “debit cards” in the 1960s.
4. A brief worksheet with suggestions on how to save money can be obtained by emailing letters@tidings.org with the heading “Money Saving Ideas”
5. Don’t want to leave the impression that we never again used Credit Cards. They can be a convenient way to consolidate bills, for use when traveling, and some credit cards provide travel credits or cash payback that can be useful. However, we have stuck to the practice of paying in full at the end of each monthly period, which is a practical means of not allowing debt to get out of hand.

Forgiveness (3)

If we confess our sins, the LORD is faithful to forgive us: “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1John 1:9). As the context in First John shows, there are two key points here. First, it is essential that we confess our sins: “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*” (1John 1:8, 10). Second, we are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: “*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin... And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (1John 1:7; 2:1b-2).

On the first of these points, the last article reviewed the rich Bible language for sin, confession, and forgiveness. As to the second point, it is fundamental to our faith, as indicated by the following brief list of passages:

“*For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins*” (Matt 26:28 RVmg).

“*In whom [i.e., our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father’s beloved Son] we have*

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7; cf. Col 1:14).

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified... This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord... And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:10-18).

Our heavenly Father knows that we are sinful, and that no matter how much we want to please Him, we will sin. He knows we are weak creatures of the dust and that our nature will always get the best of us. Thankfully, He loves us nonetheless and provides for these inevitabilities. He has given His only begotten Son, that through his sacrifice we can be forgiven. If we believe in him and confess our sins, God is faithful to cleanse us of our iniquities.

This is only the beginning of the story. Because our Father and His Son have forgiven us, we must also forgive others!

The Lord’s prayer

Jesus highlights this principle in his lesson on prayer. When we pray for our sins to be forgiven, it is conditioned on us having forgiven those that have sinned against us: *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12); “And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us” (Luke 11:4).* This concept of us, as God’s people, forgiving those indebted to us, and by analogy of us forgiving those who have sinned against us, is based on the Year of Release (Deut 15:1-11).¹

Jesus emphasizes the importance of this practice by making the point again immediately after his archetypical prayer: *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:14-15).*

He makes this connection between us praying and us forgiving in another setting: *“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25-26).*

The apostle Paul echoes this fundamental lesson several times:

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:32).

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col 3:12-13).

The parable of the unbelievably forgiving king

In yet another setting Jesus gives an extended exhortation on forgiveness, enough to fill a whole chapter in Matthew's gospel (Matt 18). He ends the talk with a parable (Matt 18:23-35), usually called "The Unforgiving Debtor" or "The Ungrateful Servant". We have chosen instead to put the emphasis on the king, who is willing to forgive a mind-boggling amount, assuming we are willing to reciprocate to those who have trespassed against us.

One of the king's servants is brought to him. This servant owes the king 10,000 talents, the wages from an eternity of lifetimes (a talent was 6,000 denarii, and a denarius was the daily wage of a laborer). In response to the king's negative verdict, the servant pleads for patience, making the impossible claim that he will pay off the debt in full. Moved with compassion, the king forgives the servant the entire debt.

What a wonderful story. If it had stopped here, we would have thought all ended well. Surely this servant would be on his very best behavior given the unexpected leniency of his lord. Surely he would treat others with the same spirit of kindness he had been shown.

Instead, this servant goes out and finds one of his fellow servants, who owes him 100 denarii (about four months' wages). Instead of showing mercy, he takes him by the throat and insists that he pays off the debt. Unable to pay, the fellow servant pleads for patience, making a perfectly reasonable claim that he will pay off the debt in full. Unlike the king, the servant refuses the plea bargain and has his fellow servant thrown into prison.

All the other servants are sorry to see this pitiful behavior, and go tell their lord what had happened. The king calls the servant to him, and says, "*O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*" (Matt 18:32-33). The king is furious, and delivers the servant to the tormentors.

Jesus summarizes the lesson of the parable with the same words we've seen above, "*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses*" (Matt 18:35).

The parable suggests there are three good reasons we should forgive others:

- 1) Joy — God has forgiven each of us a massive amount, so we should be thankful, and more than willing to forgive others the miniscule amount they owe us.
- 2) Duty — God's forgiveness of us is contingent on us forgiving others.
- 3) Guilt — If we don't forgive others, then God will have us thrown into the torture chamber to serve out our full term of pain and suffering.

The order here may be helpful too. It is best to forgive out of joy, but if we can't do that, then forgiving out of duty is next best, and if we still have trouble doing that, then at least we should forgive out of guilt if only to avoid being punished. We have a choice of motivation: being motivated by joy is most pleasant, whereas being motivated by guilt is least satisfying. We see the same point if we follow the money: being motivated by joy is associated with the largest, essentially un-

imaginable amount of money; by duty with a small, almost trivial amount; and by guilt with no money at all, just an impossible debt. These options correspond to ways to live the Truth: we can live a life of joy in response to God's generosity; or we can live a life of duty being driven by a list of onerous have-to's, or we can live out an unpleasant guilt-ridden existence. To paraphrase Joshua: As for me and my house, we will live by joy!

We must acknowledge the enormity of our own sins against our heavenly Father. If He was not gracious to us, none of us would have any hope at all. If He had not sent His Son we would be lost. If His Son had not willingly laid down his life for us, we would still be in our sins. The relief that comes from experiencing such love should provoke us to love one another, and prod us into forgiving anything bad that someone might do to us. This is what God expects. We are to reflect His forgiving character in our lives, just as His Son has reflected his Father's character. This is the joy of true heavenly fellowship.

The process of reconciliation

Earlier in this article, Jesus outlines a three-step process that we should follow in order to be reconciled with those who trespass against us:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, [Step 1:] go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. [Step 2:] But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. [Step 3:] And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever [sins] ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever [sins] ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:15-20).

Here we focus on the first phase of the process.² There are seven key ingredients to Jesus' command:

- 1) If there is a conflict
- 2) You
- 3) Go
- 4) To the person
- 5) In private
- 6) And discuss the problem
- 7) For the purpose of reconciliation

You must take action, rather than letting the hurt fester. You should not wait for the other person to come to you: you must go to them. You must not add fuel to the fire: do not assume the worse; impute good motives instead. Do not tell anyone else: you must go directly to the person, one-on-one, in private. It may have been a simple misunderstanding, an honest mistake, an unintended offense;

and even if it wasn't, you must give the person an opportunity to repent before taking it to anyone else. Your intent must be to reconcile. Give the person a way to save face, if necessary, to confess, to apologize, to repent, to make things right by you. In short, you must do everything you can to let them do everything they can to reconcile with you. (And do not think sending an e-mail substitutes for going to the person.)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches a similar lesson with the shoe on the other foot: *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"* (Matt 5:23-24).

This is how we would want to be treated if we had trespassed against someone, so we should do the same to those who trespass against us.

How many times should we forgive?

In response to Jesus' teaching on the process of reconciling with those who have trespassed against us, Peter asks, *"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"* to which Jesus responds, *"I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven"* (Matt 18:21-22). In a similar exchange Jesus tells the disciples, *"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him"* (Luke 17:3-4).

We are like Peter. We can agree that we might sometimes need to forgive others, but surely there is a limit to how much we should have to put up with. Seven times ought to be sufficient. But Jesus expects more: in one case, he says even if it gets up to 70 times 7; in the other, he says even if the trespasses occur 7 times in a single day.

The first of these contrasts with Lamech's boast of retribution: *"Because vengeance has been exacted seven times on Cain's behalf, on Lamech's it shall be seventy times seven"* (Gen 4:24 LXX, same Greek phrase). Jesus may also be alluding to Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy:

"Seventy weeks [i.e., seventy sevens] are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Dan 9:24).

In short, there is no limit to how forgiving we must be. No wonder the apostles responded to our Lord's command, *"Increase our faith"* (Luke 17:5).

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Next article: Myths of forgiveness.

Notes:

1. For more information on this connection, see "Leviticus and the Tabernacle (9)," by Joe Hill, *Tidings*, October, 2011.
2. For a more in depth study of Matthew 18:15-20 and its context, see "Jesus' Instruction for the Ecclesia in Matthew", by Tim Young, *Tidings*, March-April, 2011.

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

(3) Some Common Objections to Biblical Gender Roles

This is Part 3 of a 4 part series about the role of Sisters in the ecclesia. This section will consider and respond to some common arguments against Biblical roles for men and women. The objections indicated below are not direct quotes from any particular sources; what I've done is paraphrase some of the opposition that I've read and heard about in the past. Section 4 will continue with further responses to common objections.

Objection: “Isn’t this article itself hypocritical? You say that women may not teach men, yet a Brother might read this article and learn from it!”

Response: This objection is an example of a “straw man” fallacy — misrepresenting your opponent’s position so that you can better argue against it. Scripture does not teach that a woman may never inform a man of anything he doesn’t already know! Paul’s words in 1Tim 2 are referring to Sisters taking on the roles of teacher or leader over Brothers, and 1Cor 14 shows us that Paul particularly applies these commands in relation to out-loud speaking and teaching during a gathering “*in the church*”. Following God’s instructions through Paul as best we can, we can say that it would be wrong for me to be a speaker at an ecclesial gathering and teach a class to my Brothers on this subject. However, we saw in our previous studies that Paul is not saying that a man may never learn from a woman at all. Bible examples such as Priscilla helping Aquila explain a matter to Apollos, and Abigail counseling David not to avenge himself against Nabal, show that a woman may certainly teach a man in proper circumstances.

Objection: “Jewish society was oppressive toward women; Jesus rebelled against this by treating women as equals.”

Response: Jewish society at the time of Jesus, inasmuch as it was a sinful, human society, may well have been oppressive toward women. This shouldn’t be surprising to us. In the Law, God established differing roles for men and women, but He has never condoned oppression or cruelty. Jesus fulfilled the intention of the Law by treating women as God would want them to be treated, and Sisters today can be encouraged by the example of the women who listened and ministered to Jesus during his ministry. However, although Jesus enjoyed close relationships with the women who ministered to him, when it came time to choose a group of leaders and teachers, he chose twelve male disciples whom he sent out to teach and perform miracles. After Jesus’ death, the early ecclesia followed the standard Jesus set by appointing men as ecclesial leaders and chose a man, Matthias, to fill the vacancy left by Judas’ death. Although Jesus taught against the prevailing sinful attitudes of men, he continued God’s model of complimentary gender roles with different job descriptions for men and women among his followers. If we truly want to follow his example, we must ask ourselves if we are willing to do as he did.

Objection: “Both men and women preached publicly when they received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.”

Response: This objection assumes that women were present in the group that spoke in tongues in Acts chapter 2; however, there isn't any direct evidence in the chapter that women spoke at all. This is supposed by Peter's reference to Joel chapter 2, which refers to daughters and handmaidens receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-18); however, the Day of Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel 2: 29, in which God also states: "*I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh*". All flesh did not receive the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2; instead, it was only the disciples who were gathered together who received the Spirit.

Even if this assumption is true and there were female disciples among those who witnessed to the crowd on the Day of Pentecost, this is not inconsistent with Sisters' roles as taught in the rest of Scripture. We saw earlier in this article that the New Testament precedent for men taking on the speaking and leadership roles applies within the ecclesia. Examples such as Aquila and Priscilla preaching to Apollos together do not violate this precedent; Priscilla does not dominate in the record, and she clearly acted as Aquila's fitting helper for preaching the gospel. It seems that those who only knew John's baptism, such as Apollos, were re-baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:1-5), so Aquila and Priscilla can be thought of as working together with an unbaptized contact. The context of Paul's words in 1Tim 2:12, "*I suffer not a woman to teach*", is his statement in the next chapter that, "*These things write I unto thee... that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God*" (1Tim 3:14-15). There is no Biblical command against Sisters helping teach those outside the Truth, as would have been the case if female believers publicly demonstrated the ability to speak in tongues to the multitude in Jerusalem. However, those who point to Acts 2 as proof that women in the ecclesia have a right to teach in the exact same way as men, seem to ignore the latter part of the chapter: when it comes time for someone to take the lead and address the whole group, it is not a woman, but Peter, standing up with the eleven (Acts 2:14) who does this; and once those in the multitude are baptized, it is said that "*they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine*", that is, the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42). Acts chapter 2 reinforces, rather than contradicts, the Biblical model.

Objection: "In Acts 21, Philip's daughters prophesied."

Response: In the case of Philip's daughters, we are only told the following: "*We [Luke, Paul and his company] entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy*" (Acts 21:8-9). The argument from a "women's rights" perspective usually goes as follows:

- 1) Phillip's daughters prophesied.
- 2) Therefore, they must have prophesied in the congregation of believers.
- 3) Therefore, women are able to teach in the congregation of believers today.

If we understand Philip's daughters in the context of the general New Testament teaching about the role of women, we can stop this speculative argument before it even reaches point 2. Paul writes in 1Cor 14:34, "*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak*". If the daughters of Philip

were faithful to the Spirit-inspired teaching of Paul, they would have obeyed these words and not spoken or prophesied in the church. However, Paul also lays down a different set of guidelines for at home (1Cor 14:35), in which a woman may freely speak and ask questions; if we know that Philip's daughters prophesied, and that they were obedient to the teachings of Paul, we can reasonably conclude that they prophesied at home, where such activity was not at all improper. In fact, the verses describing Philip's daughters support this conclusion by telling us that Paul and his company entered into the house of Phillip and abode with him; it makes sense that in this setting they observed the gift of prophecy in his four daughters.

Objection: “The Jerusalem Council established which elements of the Law were to be obeyed by the Gentile church; it did not establish that women need to be silent in obedience to the Law.”

Response: The answer to this objection is quite simple: the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) only dealt with those matters that were in dispute at the time. The interesting thing about this objection is that it admits that the Law did establish different roles for men and women. There are many principles and aspects of the Law that were carried forward into the lives of the New Testament ecclesia, but which are not mentioned in Acts 15. Marriage outside of the faith, for example, was clearly marked as sinful by the Law, but not mentioned whatsoever by the Jerusalem Council. Clearly, this does not mean that we are to then dismiss it as an aspect of the Law that was not carried over into our lives in Christ. The fact that marriage outside of the faith is commanded against elsewhere in the New Testament confirms this. When a commandment or principle found in the Law is repeated or reinforced in the New Testament, we generally consider it applicable to our lives today, and we saw earlier in this article that the Mosaic model of teaching and leadership for men is indeed reinforced in the New Testament.

Additionally, as is consistent with the examples throughout Acts, the Jerusalem Council was convened by Brothers (Acts 15:6), the speakers there were Brothers (Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James), and two men who were chief men among the brethren were chosen to travel delivering the Council's decision to the churches (Acts 15:22). Although Sisters may have been present at some point during the Council (which one might guess from the words with the whole church used in verse 22), there is no indication that they exercised a speaking or leadership role in the proceedings. This story reinforces the New Testament model.

Objection: “Paul couldn't have meant for his instructions to apply for all believers, since in 1 Corinthians 14 he says for women to ask their husbands at home — where does this leave unmarried women?”

Response: Paul may not have mentioned single women specifically in 1Cor 14:35, because his primary concern in this chapter isn't to thoroughly cover every conceivable family situation; rather, he is describing proper behavior in ecclesial meetings. His main point is to make a distinction between at home, where it is appropriate for a woman to speak, and in the church, where it is not. Married women could of course talk with their husbands at home, but single women aren't necessarily left out of this verse. The word for “husbands” in this verse, *aner*, is

translated “man” or “men” 156 times in the New Testament, and “husbands” only 50 times. Paul might very well be telling all women to ask their [men] at home, which would apply to wives, daughters, and single women all talking with their male family members. The important point here is that Paul is highlighting the environment in which the speaking is taking place: in the church is not the time for a woman to speak, but any woman, married or single, may freely discuss and ask questions about the Scriptures in a home environment.

Objection: “God wants us to use our gifts; why should educated women with a gift for speaking and leading be kept away from the podium on Sunday morning?”

Response: Does the Bible tell us that education, professional credentials, and natural skills are the prerequisites for teaching and leading the ecclesia? It’s the world that chooses leaders and teachers based on earthly qualities. God doesn’t think this way: “*man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart*” (1Sam 16:7). Moses, for instance, asked God to send someone else as he was slow of speech, but God said, “*I will be with thy mouth*” (Exod 4:12). However, this being said, what would God want women to do with the gifts and talents that He gave them in the first place? Who is in charge of how those gifts should be used? Consider Paul’s instructions to the first century ecclesia: “*Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*” (1Cor 14:29-32).

The prophets were expected to exercise self-control in the use of their gifts. For example, a person who was given a prophecy and stood to speak it, was required to stop if another prophecy came to someone else. This means that God could give someone a prophecy that was not meant to be spoken in that setting. 1Cor 14:27 shows us that the same was true for those with the gift of tongues; the fourth person with a tongue was not permitted to speak it, even though their gift was also from God! Furthermore, if no interpreter was present, no one was permitted to use the gift of tongues at all! This principle of the gifts being subject to the prophets would also apply to gifted women, who were instructed to be silent in the ecclesia. Women would be able to control their gift and remain silent in this particular setting, while exercising their gift more freely in other venues.

The Bible also shows that possession of the Holy Spirit doesn’t allow an individual to override God’s hierarchy. Num 27:18-21, for example, shows that even though Joshua was a man in whom is the spirit, he was still subject to Eleazar, God’s appointed priest. Similarly, Aaron and Miriam contested Moses’ appointment to headship over the congregation by pointing out that they, too, were vessels for God’s words: “*Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us*” (Num 12:2)? In response to this, God struck Miriam with leprosy, only to heal her in response to the prayers of Moses; God thus affirmed that His established hierarchy was to be followed regardless of the possession of the Spirit. If this was so with the Holy Spirit gifts, it is surely true today when we consider

our own natural talents and gifts. Just because a particular Brother has a gift for leadership doesn't mean that he is supposed to be the one in charge of the ecclesia. In fact, the New Testament states very clearly that there are qualifications to be followed for ecclesial leadership, such as ruling your household well and not being a novice in the faith (1Tim 3:4-6). Similarly, just because a woman has a gift for teaching, it does not follow that she can exercise it independently of the Bible's limits on where and when it is appropriate for a woman to teach. We must all limit ourselves, our talents and our desires, to bring them into obedience to God's word; ecclesial roles are just one small part of that.

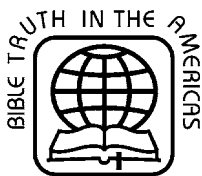
I also believe that a Sister who makes this objection is sadly limiting her definition of teaching and leadership. There are many ways in which a Sister can exercise a natural talent for teaching and shepherding, and a truly creative and enthusiastic Sister can find countless avenues to serve God with her skills while staying within His limits. To single out the podium as the one place where she wants to serve is showing a bias; somehow, she must think that the podium is the most important place in the ecclesia, and has decided she must have the one role denied to her by Scripture. I see this as an unfortunate loss of her talents and energy in other areas, and I would encourage my Sisters who find themselves in this position to really search their hearts and motivations for serving God.

Objection: The word “Brethren” in 1Cor 14 means “Brothers and Sisters”; therefore, verse 26, *“How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation,”* tells us that both Brothers and Sisters were sharing doctrines, tongues, revelations, etc. at ecclesial meetings.

Response: In many places in the New Testament, the word Brethren can refer to both men and women; other times, it refers solely to men in the ecclesia, as in 1Cor 7:29 and 9:5. Which is it in 1Cor 14? The readers of this chapter are called “Brethren” or “you” by Paul, using second-person pronouns; however, the pronouns change to the third-person “they” in the section about women, verses 34 and 35. If the Sisters were included in the term Brethren, why didn't Paul write directly to them? If, on the other hand, Paul is primarily addressing men in the ecclesia throughout the chapter, the pronoun shift makes sense, as does the phrase “your women” in verse 34. The context indicates that women are being written about, rather than addressed directly.

However, let's suppose that Sisters were indeed included in the word Brethren in 1Cor 14. Their inclusion would parallel the case of a Brother with the gift of tongues. In verse 28, the tongue speaker is told that if there is no interpreter present, he must keep silence in spite of his gift. The same goes for the prophets — if a revelation came to another, the first prophet would have to stop (vs 30). It may sound strange that God would give a prophet a prophecy that he was not free to deliver, but according to this chapter it certainly happened! The same would hold true for women in the ecclesia, who learn in verses 34-35 that they are not supposed to take a speaking position in ecclesial meetings. Instead, like the male prophets who had to remain silent, Sisters can “speak to [themselves], and to God (verse 28).”

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)



Bible Mission News

Baptisms in Lima, Perú

Bro. Jim Hunter (Linkman for Peru) shares that on February 19th, he had the pleasure of baptizing two new sisters in Lima. The satisfaction was compounded by their being not only the first sisters in the meeting but also the wives of brethren, so that there are now two complete families in the little ecclesia. Gloria Marcos is the wife of Bro. Flavio Carmona, while Katia Rivas is married to Bro. Julián Enríquez. Shortly after the baptisms, carried out in a wading pool in the back yard of Flavio and Gloria's house, our two new sisters were received into fellowship in a particularly joyous memorial service presided over by Rec. Bro. César Franklin.

To add a little spice to the occasion, Katia was 8 1/2 months pregnant, giving rise to the somewhat anxious hope that the day of her rebirth in Christ would come around before the birth of the new member of the family! But by God's grace all went well with the rebirths, and exactly two weeks later, on Sunday, March 4th, the happiness was completed when Sis. Katia gave birth to a healthy little girl, a welcome little sister to her and Julián's two young sons. We pray that our Father in heaven may continue to bless, strengthen and prosper the Lima Ecclesia to his honour and glory.

In the photo, from left to right appear all five members of the Lima Ecclesia: Julián and Katia, Gloria, her husband Flavio and César. Also in the picture is Nahuel, 10-year-old son of Flavio and Gloria and a very good little Bible student in his own right!



Lima, Peru Ecclesia

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

El Salvador Bible School 2011: Sharing fellowship as if we were in the kingdom of God

Bro. Manuel and Sis. Silvia Fernández (recording Brother for the San Salvador ecclesia and his wife) share their memories of the year end Bible School in El Salvador.

At our 2011 Bible school the ecclesias of El Salvador were united with the special guests who had come to bring us messages, encouraging us to prepare patiently and faithfully for the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus. We left for the school on the morning of Friday, Dec. 30, looking forward with joy to spending some unforgettable moments disconnected from the stress and discouragement of our everyday lives in the world. In all, 102 of us made the annual pilgrimage to the pine-covered hills near our country's northern border.



The brethren's group; class given on "Prayer" by Bro. Ed Binch

We were overjoyed to have Bro. Ed and Sis. Beth Binch with us, who have spent so much of their lives helping the ecclesias in El Salvador. Bro. Ed gave several classes on the subject "King Jehoshaphat and his zeal for the ways of the Lord." The talks were very edifying in reminding us that in every moment of our lives we need to keep in close communion with God through prayer so we don't lose sight of our goal. When we make mistakes it is because we have decided to shut him out of our lives without realizing that He knows all our thoughts, making our sins all the more serious. We saw this in the example of Jehoshaphat, who was zealous in his service to God but on one occasion was more concerned to be accepted in the eyes of men than in the sight of God.

It was a pleasure to have with us our new brother Carlos Santana of the Canary Islands, who had flown to El Salvador at end of October to be baptized after studying the Bible online and by email, particularly with Bro. Bill Rawson. Bro. Carlos has since returned home, where he is beginning to spread the knowledge of the true gospel. As usual there was a good contingent of members and friends from the neighbouring country of Guatemala. In addition, we were happy to have with us Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter. Without them, this event would not be the same

because they strengthen us with their words and encourage our young people to make wise decisions at crucial points in their lives. Sis. Jean also gave a class to the women, from which we derived encouragement to continue awaiting the coming of our Lord Jesus. Our children and young people made a special effort to make this a particularly happy school. For many people in the world the year-end holidays furnish an opportunity to live it up with friends and relatives, whereas for us it was an incomparable opportunity to spend time in close companionship with those of like precious faith who praise and fear the Lord, calling on His name.



Sis. Jean Hunter and the class of 27 young people.

We were specially touched by the example of little Lea Castillo, 11, daughter of Bro. René and Sis. Crissia Castillo. Lea arrived at the school full of joy despite feeling pain her abdomen. An analgesic eased the discomfort and she soldiered on, participating in the skits and other childrens' presentations. However to the dismay of us all, by Sunday morning the pain had become unbearable and her parents had to take her on the 2-hour drive down the mountain to hospital in San Salvador. Lea's greatest concern was missing the Sunday-school prize-giving,



**The 11-14
year old
class**



The 6-8 year old class.

so as she was leaving we held a mini-ceremony, cheering and clapping as we gave her her prize. Upon arriving at the hospital Lea received emergency surgery for a burst appendix. We are grateful that the infection had not had a chance to spread, so that despite some anxious moments she was soon back on her feet. However our prayers had to continue, because shortly after the school Bro. Neftalí Espinoza had a motorcycle accident on

the highway en route to his home in Sonsonate. Fortunately God was watching over him as well, so that while he suffered a fractured collarbone and some torn muscles he is recovering at home. Though he will have to miss several months' work he continues to preach to all those he comes in contact with, as has always been his practice.

We are all impatient to get to the end of the present year so that we may enjoy another school, if the kingdom doesn't come first. *"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (1Thess 1:2-3).*

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

Memories from 2011 Year End Bible School at Kendal, Jamaica

Sis. Gerzel Gordon, from the May Pen Ecclesia in Jamaica, shares the following memories of the year end.

Bible School in Jamaica. On Friday, December 30, 2011, brethren and sisters from across the island, gathered together at the Kendal Camp, to begin our Year End Bible School. Bro. Marlon Jackson happily welcomed everyone and prayed God's richest blessings would be on us, giving us open minds to learn more from His precious Word and that the fellowship over the weekend would bring us closer to God. The bowls of soup were quite appropriate and enjoyable at this time.

Saturday's activities started at 6:00 am with devotion. After breakfast, Bro. Patrick Johnson led the first session of his two part studies on, "I am the Good Shepherd". He expounded on how Jesus is the Good Shepherd and through him alone, salvation is made possible. He further developed his talk on how the Shepherd leads his own sheep, protects them from robbers, helps the wandering sheep from trespassing, searches for the strayed sheep and brings them back where they belong.

Christ calls his sheep by name, thus giving them confidence and affection that they follow him, while they refuse to follow any other. The leaders in the ecclesia are all shepherds, under Christ, the Chief shepherd, appointed to tend the flock of God.

“The meek shall inherit the earth”, was done by Bro. Keith Kinlocke. His point of emphasis was that being meek is closely tied to humility. The meek endures provocation, however unjust it may be, for he knows that the suffering will help him gain more strength in the Lord. Meekness, being one of God’s characteristics, is a requirement in our lives, if we are to be true servants of God. Meekness is the epitome of righteousness, as pride is the epitome of wickedness.

In Bro. Stanley Frazer’s studies on “Lessons from Samson and Delilah”, it was made clear that Samson’s lust defeated him. He had not taken God’s requirement seriously. Samson lost his marvelous strength, when God left him. His strength returned when he prayed to God and God answered him. Samson’s name is listed among the great men of faith in the Bible. God is a merciful Father, who forgives our weaknesses and short comings, as long as we turn to Him in prayer.

The Memorial Service started at 10:30 pm, Saturday night. Bro. Keith Kinlocke exhorted us not to send the wrong signal in our words and actions, as this can cause our downfall. Be true and honest in what we say and do. At 12:00 midnight was the Dedication Prayer. At the end of the service there were the usual hugs and kisses among brethren and sisters. This is always a touching experience.

Later in the day, the speakers for the weekend summed up their studies. All deliberations were interesting and inspiring. There is always a sad feeling when it is time for farewell. It was the time for the cars and buses to go down the hill, one behind the other, on our homeward journey. It was indeed an enjoyable weekend of praise and worship to our Heavenly Father.

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



Jamaican Year End Bible School

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. \$10.00 US (372 pages, 2010)

How to Order

Online — www.tidings.org (Go to Books). E-mail — books@tidings.org Mail — Tidings Books, 11659 Caves Road, Chesterland, OH 44026 Shipping & handling costs 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)

Special Invitation

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

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
37th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 23-29, 2012.*

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

*Special week-long evening series by Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) —
"In the Beginning, God Created"*

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

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

News & Notices

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

BOSTON, MA

Once again it is with sadness that we announce the passing of two more of our beloved sisters in Christ. On February 5, 2012, Sis. Henrietta (Penny) Caddell fell asleep in Christ one day short of her ninety first birthday, and on February 16, 2012, our Sis. Pauline Kunan passed away at age eighty nine. Both sisters now rest peacefully awaiting the Lord's call to life again at his return.

We would like to thank our Bro. John Mannell from the Mississauga West, ON Ecclesia for leading our Sunday school class as well as offering up the word of exhortation on January 1, 2012.

Jim Sullivan

BRANTFORD, ON

On February 11, 2012, we enjoyed another very successful Little Disciples and Junior CYC Gathering at Camp Trillium on the theme, "David: Boy of Faith," with over 250 adults and children from Pre-K to grade 7 attending, and bringing many cumulative hours on workbooks and Bible marking to a climax! We also had a great Senior CYC Gathering on March 3, 2012, on the theme, "Elisha: Power is Salvation" and we thank Bro. Daniel Cadieux (Mississauga West, ON) for his exposition and ministrations over the weekend.

We recently held a series of three special lectures that were advertised in the newspaper and held at a local high school dealing with atheism, the promise of a kingdom, and events in Israel. We pray that this witness, shining forth the light of gospel truth in this area, will find receptive hearts to the honour of the Father.

We look forward to our upcoming Family Study Weekend to be held April 21-22, 2012, with our Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, UK) speaking.

We commend our Sis. Ona Lawton to the Barrie, ON Ecclesia and pray the Father will be with her and support her for the truth's sake. We will all very much miss our sister's wonderful, loving and cheerful spirit. We also transfer our Bro. Philip and Sis. Sharon Krakar to the love and care of the Cambridge, ON Ecclesia, and will miss them and pray that they enjoy fellowship with their family there.

Daniel Billington

CALGARY, AB

Since we last wrote there have been numerous changes in our ecclesia. In June 2011 we laid to rest our Sis. Bertha Hobkirk, aged 102. She joined the Calgary Ecclesia in 1993 from another fellowship and was an active member with her husband, the late Bro. Bill. Lately she was unable to attend due to infirmity. We wait, in hope, the day of resurrection.

We commend, in love, Sis. Aviva Mindorff to the care of the Vernon Okanagan Central Ecclesia. On 1st April 2012 we rejoiced with Bro. Igor and Sis. Natasha Boiko in the

baptism of their younger son MICHAEL BOIKO. We pray for God's blessing on Bro. Michael as we journey together towards the kingdom.

Following a change in employment we welcome, from Ontario, Bro. Peter and Sis. Chesed Jennings. They will be living some distance from Calgary and will meet with other Brethren and Sisters in southern Alberta regularly and at Calgary occasionally. We pray they will be happy amongst us.

The Calgary/Edmonton fraternal gathering will be held in Calgary October 6-7, 2012, God willing. Our speaker is Bro. David Green, Sussex, New Brunswick. His subject is "The Spirit of God". Further details will be notified nearer the time.

John Fairhurst

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We thank our Bro. Ron Kidd for his recent study weekend. We had a good number of brothers and sisters in attendance.

We sorrow with our Sis. Flo DiSilvestro in the loss of her brother, Robert Kennedy, and our Sis. Vittoria Marsden in the falling asleep of her mother, Sis. Mildred Leake of the Torquay, UK Ecclesia. The steadfast hope that we have of the resurrection and the kingdom of God enable us not to sorrow as others that have no hope. We also thank the staff of the Bethesda Christadelphian Care Home for their loving care of Sis. Mildred during her time at the home. Bro. Stewart and Sis. Vittoria Marsden wish to thank all brothers and sisters for their generous contributions toward the Bethesda Christadelphian Care Home in lieu of flowers in the falling asleep of Sis. Mildred Leake.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord including: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Mike Davie (Cranston, RI); Sarah Telles (Norfolk, VA); Ron and Barbara Kidd (London, ON); and Patty Robinson (Hamilton Book Road, ON).

The Echo Lake Fall Study Weekend is scheduled, Lord willing, for October 13-14, 2012. The speaker is Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) and his subject is, "Promises of the Kingdom".

Stewart Marsden

GRANITE STATE, NH

There have been many exciting changes for our ecclesia as of late, but first and foremost we are delighted to announce the baptism of KATIE RAND on February 19, 2012. Sis. Katie is the daughter of Bro. Chris and Sis. Debbie Rand. It is always such a joyful occasion to witness the humble submission of one's life to the service of the Lord, and we pray that Yahweh will continue to bless our new sister and keep her in His way as she travels life's road to His kingdom.

We have also been blessed recently with a hall of our own after thirty plus years of renting and meeting in homes. We greatly rejoice in the opportunities that our new, albeit "temporary" home, "even so come Lord Jesus," will provide us as it is located in a very central spot in the community. Activities in the downtown area throughout the summer and fall last year gave us occasions for outreach work even before we were moved into the hall, and our reception by the town has been wonderful! We have recently begun meeting in the lower floor of the hall and look forward to moving upstairs very soon as the weather improves. We have all enjoyed and benefited from

the work that we have accomplished together in getting the building into shape as it needed a bit of updating before we could move in. We are so very thankful for the help that we have received from our brothers and sisters in the faith and it is a great blessing to have a place where we can get together whenever we like and stay as long as we like to share in warm fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

Steve Smith

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestow, NJ) visited us on March 11, 2012, and gave us an excellent exhortation. Afterward the sisters provided a wonderful luncheon. We were glad to have the following visitors attend our services during March: Jeremy Jeffery, Decio. Olivia DeCarvalho, Jim Melody and Nancy Ryan. We were pleased to have a history lesson by Sis. Esther Dunn on the history of our ecclesia based upon the compilation of news from the Christadelphian magazine from 1890 by Bro. Jim Harper. Next year is the fiftieth anniversary of the first service in our current chapel so this was a good start for next year's celebration.

We also mailed our old, but still useful, hymnals and Bibles to the CBMA to be forwarded by them where needed in this world. We mailed a box of small plastic tabs or bread ties to Sis. Marie Washington of the Echo Lake Ecclesia to help purchase wheelchairs in Africa for the needy.

Stephen J. DeMarco

LONDON, ON

The London Ecclesia will be hosting a study day on June 23, 2012, God willing. Our speaker is Bro. Peter Forbes (Glenfield, UK). The subject will be, "Making the Psalms Live", and classes will commence at 11 am. Lunch will be provided.

Ron Kidd

OLYMPIA, WA

Olympia has a new recording brother. Please direct all future communication to: Bro. Casey K. Caronna, 1024 Boundary St., Olympia, WA, 98501. He may be reached by phone at 360 943 0643, or by email at casey.caronna@gmail.com.

Larry Weiss

PITTSBURGH, PA

We are very pleased to announce the transfer from the Portland, OR Ecclesia of Bro. Stephen and Sis. Kristy Robinson and family. They are a welcome addition to our ecclesia.

It was good to have the following brothers and sisters visiting our ecclesia: Chris and Rebecca Stilwell and family, Tyler Misko, and Bob and Linda Scott (Paris Ave., OH); and Linda Hibbs (Victoria, B.C.). We thank Bro. Bob Scott for his encouraging words of exhortation.

We are looking forward to our study weekend on May 5-6, 2012. Bro. Bill Link will speak on the topic, "The Lord Shall Yet Comfort Zion." All are welcome to attend. Please let us know you are coming by calling or texting Bro. Len Budney at 412-983-1970, or sending an email to pghecclesia@gmail.com.

Len Budney

POMONA, CA

Since our last report we have witnessed the baptisms of three new brothers in our ecclesia. FORREST BRINKERHOFF, the eldest son of Bro. Bobby and Sis. Kim Brinkerhoff was baptized on June 26, 2010, SEAN ATWOOD the son of Sis. Kathie Atwood and grandson of Bro. Stan and Sis. Eunice Newton was baptized on December 10, 2010, and RICHARD BRINKERHOFF, who is also the son of Bro. Bobby and Sis. Kim Brinkerhoff, was baptized on February 11, 2012.

On June 10, 2011, we rejoiced with Sis. Janet Davidson of our ecclesia and Bro. Jim Collister of the Verdugo Hills, CA Ecclesia as they were united in marriage at our Ecclesial Hall in the presence of a large number of witnesses. We wish them well on their journey toward the Kingdom together.

It is a pleasure to announce the following additions to our Sunday school. Robyn Cadieux was born to Bro. Paul and Sis. Jasmine Cadieux on July 9, 2010, and Adalia Vaughn was born to Bro. Ryan and Sis. Jerusha Vaughn on October 22, 2011.

We have lost several of our elder members recently. Bro. Jim Edgerly died while at his home in Montana on June 25, 2010, and Bro. Bob LeVea died while travelling to New York to visit his family on August 11, 2010. Sis. Nancy Clarke passed away on February 6, 2011. Sis. Nancy was a long-time member of this Ecclesia, having grown up in our Sunday School, and having married her husband of many years, Bro. Arthur Clarke, here in our Ecclesial Hall. They now await the call of the Master together. We have also, more recently, lost Bro. John Hensley, on July 10, 2011, and Bro. Everett Malone on January 3, 2012. Sis. Nancy, Bro. John, and Bro. Everett all leave behind large families, many of whom follow their examples of faithfulness.

Our number has been increased by the addition of several new members by transfer from other ecclesias. Sis. Stephanie Higham transferred her membership from the Verdugo Hills, CA Ecclesia on November 7, 2010, and Sis. Christi Haltom transferred her membership from the Detroit Royal Oak, MI Ecclesia on the same date. We have also gained by transfer Bro. Julius Ngong, who was formerly a member of the Douala, Cameroon Ecclesia, on January 9, 2011. Bro. Julius also brings with him his wife Florence, who attends regularly. Bro. David and Sis. Joanna Haltom, and Bro. Ryan and Sis. Jerusha Vaughn transferred their membership to Pomona from the Detroit Royal Oak, MI Ecclesia on August 28, 2011, and Bro. Jim Collister transferred from the Verdugo Hills, CA Ecclesia on September 25, 2011.

We have lost by transfer Sis. Joy Wilson who transferred to the Verdugo Hills, CA Ecclesia on September 19, 2010, and Sis. Debbie Hensley who transferred to the Houston West, TX Ecclesia on June 22, 2011. We know that they will be great assets to the brothers and sisters in their new ecclesial homes. Finally, we must report that Sis. Cindy LaFavor, Bro. Justin Davidson, Bro. Daniel Padilla, and Sis. Allysha Richardson are no longer in fellowship with us.

Brian E. McDonald.

SANTA BARBARA, CA

It has been over a year since we reported the activities of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia. The Santa Barbara Ecclesia continues to maintain a strong and active light stand in our community with seven visitors attending Sunday School and Bible Classes in our ecclesial hall. We are thankful that God continues to call out a people for his name and that we are able to respond to the call. Keep our students in your prayers as they actively study the Scriptures or Truth.

It is with sadness that we report the death of our Sister Jeanette Bailey, the mother of our Fred Walker of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia and Ann Loftis of the Pomona CA Ecclesia. After many faithful years of service in the Truth, Jeanette was laid to rest on January 15th, 2012 at the age of 95 in Pomona, California . May her sleep be short when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Out of 27 members, we have four Brethren and Sisters over the age of 90 with the eldest, Wilma Hirst celebrating her 96th birthday this year and six brethren and sisters over the age of 87. We thank God for strengthening our elder brethren and sisters. They are such an example to our ecclesia of faithfulness to the service of God in these last days of Gentile times. They are the faithful attendees to Bible class, Sunday School and Memorial Service as well as all ecclesial functions. May Yahweh continue to bless them and our ecclesia as we continue to put forth His Gospel message and await the return of His son.

In September we once again celebrated our annual Labor Day Picnic in the back yard of our John Seagoe's home. After a word of encouragement from God's Word, we had a wonderful day of fellowship, food and fun with brethren and sisters of like precious faith from near and far. We look forward to this years Labor Day Picnic to be held on Saturday September 1st. If you are in the area, join our ecclesia for this day of Fellowship and Food with those of like precious faith around the Word of God.

This past year we welcomed around the table of the Lord the following brethren and sisters: Jason and Ruth Hensley, David and Erin Clubb, Chris and Kathleen Stickney, Erik Sternad, Ken and Bonnie Sommerville, Geoff and Brenda Lee Smith, Aidan Smith (Simi Hills); Tony Banks, Linda Davis, Bryan and Harmonie Blanchard, Nathan and Janee Blanchard, Al and Teri Carlson, (Verdugo Hills); Ron and Shirley Stewart, Steve and Kathy Settle, Ron and Melody Magness (Lompoc); Sid Wattles (North County); Michael and Myra Stickney, Jane, Hannah and Emily Tunnell, Becky Nagel, Steve and Susie Stewart, Sherri Luskin, Roger and Janya Schlottman (San Diego); Jim and Marilyn Seagoe, Jerry and Wendy Hirst (San Francisco); Lolita Van Merlo (Pomona); Jim and Marilyn Land (Los Angeles); Jon and Carrie Spencer, Taylor Spencer, Larry and Kathleen King (Jackson County, OR); Dave and Becky Seagoe, Denise Main (Olympia, WA); Ken Smith, Marin and Joan Norris (UK); Nigel Fletcher (Australia).

We would like to thank the following Brethren for ministering to our ecclesia with Bible classes and the word of exhortation: Ron Stewart, Jason Hensley, David Club, Michael Stickney, Chris Stickney, Geoff Smith, Ken Sommerville, Jim Land, Taylor Spencer, Erik Sternad, Jim Seagoe, Ken Smith, Nigel Fletcher, Jerry Hirst, Martin Norris. and Roger Schlottman.

If you are ever heading up the California Coast, be sure and stop in the beautiful little coastal town of Santa Barbara and enjoy fellowship around the word with our ecclesia. It is our prayer, if Christ remains away, that you like Santa Barbara so much you will want to stay. Our fervent prayer is that our Lord and Savior will return soon to establish his Fathers Kingdom on this earth and all or plans are interrupted by that great and glorious day.....even so come Lord Jesus.

Craig Stickney

SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE, NH

It is with great joy we note that PHILIP QUINDAZZI, son of our Sis. Zoe Ilaqua, was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ on February 11, 2012. Our new brother was immersed by his grandfather, Bro. Terry Fearn, of the Vancouver, BC Ecclesia. Bro. Terry brought us the exhortation on Sunday. Our thanks to the Worcester, MA Ecclesia for the use of their hall and for their hospitality in hosting the baptism.

Please note that I have been elected to serve as Recording Brother. Please address all written correspondence to me at P.O. Box 358, Hollis, NH 08049. I may also be reached by e-mail at cubshaw@verizon.net.

Frank Conahan

ST. LUCIA

Since last reporting there has been a lot of activity at the St. Lucia ecclesia. In November 2011, Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell (Hamilton Greenaway) spent one month here and supported our activities in preaching and exhorting the members.

In January and February Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo) came down for seven weeks. During those seven weeks Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo) came for nearly three weeks. During their stay, lunchtime classes were organized at the ecclesial hall and we were encouraged by the response from the public. A number of new contacts came and we started to study the Acts of the Apostles. The format was informal with questions invited from those who attended. During those weeks several series of lectures were held with attendance from interested friends numbering from four to 14. After each lecture questions were invited and on some occasions the question period lasted for as long as 30 minutes.

In the middle of February Bro. Jim and Sis. Anne Barton (Kingston, Jamaica) came for three weeks, and their assistance in preaching and ecclesial support was much appreciated. Bro. Jim had prepared an excellent 70 page booklet on the Apocalypse and used this as the basis of discussion at the ecclesial Bible class and the midday classes referred to above.

We were delighted to have the company of Bro. and Sis. Philip Weatherall (Daventry, UK) and Bro. and Sis. Daniel Harrison (Northampton, UK) who came to St. Lucia on holiday and made a most valuable contribution to our preaching work and helping the ecclesia with pastoral support. Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines (Sussex, NB) came for three weeks in March. The lunch time classes were continued as well as another series of lectures.

An ecclesial outing was held on Feb 22, 2012, a holiday in St. Lucia, to Pigeon Island. It was thoroughly enjoyed by the local brothers and sisters as well as all the visitors. Any brothers or sisters able to spend a holiday in St. Lucia and attend the memorial service would be most welcome.

Martin Webster

EARLY ISSUES OF THE TIDINGS MAGAZINE NEEDED

We are attempting to create a complete archive of the *Tidings Magazine* going all the way back to the very first issue. We have a fairly complete archive from January, 1958 forward, but unfortunately prior to that we have very little in our possession. We would like to compile a record of the first 19 years of the publication to whatever extent it is still possible.

The magazine got its start in February of 1939 as the Pomona Christadelphian Sunday School newsletter. The title for the first half of 1939 was "*The Junior Berean*", but this title was changed to "*The Junior Christadelphian*" in the latter part of 1939. It continued to be published under that name through the May, 1956 issue, at which time the current title of "*The Christadelphian Tidings of the Kingdom of God*" was chosen.

We would be happy to receive copies of any of the above titles, from the first issue in February, 1939 through the December, 1957 issue. We will be scanning the originals and would be happy to return them to you if you so desire. Any copies that you have may be sent to: McDonald Printing Services, P.O. Box 400, San Dimas, CA 91773-0400.

Brian E. McDonald

WASHINGTON DC MUSIC STUDY WEEKEND

God willing, the Washington DC Ecclesia will be hosting a special study weekend October 5-7, 2012. The theme of the weekend will be, "Make The Voice Of His Praise To Be Heard!" and will be led by Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Bro. Phil was involved in the preparation of the 2002 edition of the Christadelphian Hymn Book, and composed Hymn 100. He has been a music teacher in the UK and in Kenya where he directed the Kenya Conservatoire of Music, and conducted the Nairobi Orchestra. Before retiring, he was the Director of Examinations for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in the UK. Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. For further information please contact Bro. David Perry at dperry1@gmail.com.

Bob Kling

The attraction of "tells"

Note: A "tell", or "tel", is an archaeological mound created by human occupation and abandonment of a geographical site over many centuries. A classic tell looks like a small hill with sloping sides and a plateau on the top.

Tells have attractions for archaeologists quite comparable to the enticements leading on a young lover. Tells are old or young; display a degree of beauty, sophistication, and wealth; and have a distinctive shape and measurements; a more or less interesting past with greater or lesser capability of communicating it; varying accessibility; and varying prospects for the archaeological marriage. However, the archaeologist's set of values may differ from those of the customary young lover. The British mystery writer Agatha Christie is reported to have said of her archaeologist husband, Max Mallowan, "It's great to be married to an archaeologist. The older I get, the more he appreciates me."

Paul W. Lapp, Director
American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem

Minute Meditation

Wait before Worrying

Charles Spurgeon recognized the draining effect worry can have on our daily life: “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but only empties today of its strength.” We function less effectively when we are consumed with worry. How realistic are the concerns that sometimes overwhelm us? Winston Churchill, a man who saw his share of trouble as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II, once observed, “When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.” How many of our worries fail to materialize? We worry, for example, that the plane we are on will crash — and then it lands safely.

Most of us realize the harm that worry does to the body, but most of us do it anyway. Here is a technique that can help us break the worry habit: Wait before worrying. Keep in mind that the average worrier is 92% inefficient — only 8% of what anyone worries about ever comes true. There is the humorous story about the fellow who was so full of worries that when he found something new to worry about he would say, “I have too many worries right now — it will be six months before I will have time to worry about this one.”

Unfortunately, we live in such a fast paced society that if we get a new worry it goes right to the top of the heap and we immediately begin to worry about it. We need to learn to wait. Wait before worrying. It is not easy, but it is right. Often, time alone solves the thing that had us worrying. Suppose someone is not home at the scheduled time. While we are waiting, before worrying, the person shows up.

What should we do while we are waiting before worrying? Turn the new worry over to the Lord. Tell Him all about it. My favorite verse on this subject is Paul's advice to those who lived in Phillipi. He told them, “Don't worry over anything whatever. Tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer and the peace of God which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus.” [Phillips translation]

Once the problem is turned over to God, it is foolish then to worry about it. After all, the problem is now given to God. Trust God with the worry. God is bigger than any problem we will ever have to face. If we take it back from Him and worry, it means that we really have not turned it over to Him in the first place.

King Hezekiah is an example of how to follow the instructions that Paul gave to the Philippians. Hezekiah received a terrible letter from the Assyrian King Sennacherib threatening to destroy him and all the people with him in Jerusalem. “Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.” Then Hezekiah told God every detail of his needs. “And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see:

and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God...O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.”

And what was God’s response? “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake... And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand:”

Hezekiah trusted God with his worry. He told God his needs, and the LORD answered his prayer. God will also answer our prayer. The answer may not be as spectacular an answer as King Hezekiah received, but the God that heard his prayer is the very same God to whom we pray.

When we face trouble in life, let us learn to wait before worrying. Let us wait on the Lord by turning our worries over to our God. We know from Scriptures that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. We need to trust God and believe in what He can do, as Paul tells us, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

MAY 2012

5-6 Pittsburgh, PA Study Weekend. Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD) speaking on the topic “Zechariah: The Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.” Contact Bro. Len Budney at (412) 983-1970 or pghecclesia@gmail.com.

11-13 Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend endorsed by the Nanaimo, BC Ecclesia. The location is Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, BC on Vancouver Island. The study leader is Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): “You Faithful Women of the Last Days”. (Non refundable deposit required by April 1, 2012). Further details contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Rd., Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8, or e-mail yvonne2001@shaw.ca.

18-20 Sussex, NB Sussex Youth Camp. Speaker: Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON): “Man’s Wisdom vs. God’s Wisdom”. To register contact Sis. Marie Baines, pandm6@hotmail.com or 140 Bryant Dr., Sussex, NB, E4E 5M9 with a \$25.00 deposit check.

19-20 Prince George, BC Fraternal Gathering. Speaker: Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA). Theme: “Spiritual Muscle for Five Big Mistakes”. Contact: Bro. Rod Massey 1masseyrd@gmail.com.

26 Ottawa, ON Eastern Ontario Study Day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): “Early Genesis: the Forest, the Trees, the Weeds, the Deeds”. Contact Sis. Ethel Archard elpis@sympatico.ca.

JUNE 2012

2-3 NY Fraternal Gathering at the South Ozone Park, NY Hall. Bro. John Pople has agreed to speak on "Solomon and Delilah". Contact: Bro. Ben Drepaul yerubbaal@yahoo.com or (718) 847-9638.

8-10 New York Sisters' Retreat at The Inn, Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Teacher: Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO): "Problems and Prayers". Registration deadline is April 15. Space is limited register early with 50% deposit. Entire weekend cost: Single \$376, Double \$288, Triple \$258 per person. Make check payable to "New York Christadelphian". Mail to Sis. Averil Ferguson, 814A Tilden St., Apt. 5B, Bronx, NY, 10467. Contact Sis. Averil Ferguson (718) 881-8705 or e-mail averilpsm23@juno.com.

23 London, ON Study day. Our speaker is Bro. Peter Forbes (Glenfield, UK). The subject will be, "Making the Psalms Live", and classes will commence at 11 am. Lunch will be provided.

24-30 California Christadelphian Kids Camp. Children 9-16. Teachers are Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia) and Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Our theme is "Elisha". Cost is \$125 before February 29, and \$150 afterwards. Register at www.kidscampcalifornia.com. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com.

30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. Theme "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23). Youth theme "I will Praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "The Lord Raised Up Judges" (adults) and "Paul's Powerful Preaching" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord" (adults) and "What Would You Do?" (teens); Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia): "Epistle to James — Be Ye Doers of the Word" (adults) and "How Judge Ye? — Case Studies Based on the Law of Moses" (teens). Information on website www.christadelphians.net/macbs.

JULY 2012

1-7 California Youth Conference at Ojai, CA. An exciting week of study and fellowship for ages 17 (or baptized) and up. The theme is Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians. The speaker will be Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia). Contact www.youthconferencecalifornia.com or Bro. Jason Hensley jason@speakingofhisglory.com.

4-9 Calaveras Family Bible Camp Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Classes will be given by Bro. David Haltom (Pomona, CA) on the topic "The Reality of Discipleship". Contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcDonald@mcDonald-printing.com.

8-14 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. The teachers are Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA): "Scriptural Discipline" adults, and "The Fundamentals of Bible Prophecy" teens; Bro. Stephen Mansfield (Golden Grove, Australia): "1 Corinthians" adults, and "Ephesians" teens; Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia): "The Power of Prayer" adults, and "How Judge Ye?" teens. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland shannonjejh@att.net. Registration forms are on our website: www.swcbs.com.

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

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

21-29 Midwest Bible School will be held at Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Mark Vincent (UK): "Things Done Twice — God's Hand in the Life of Joseph"; Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "The Life of Timothy"; Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia): "The King's Manifesto for Life". For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Dr., Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, e-mail: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

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

28-Aug 4 Christadelphian Bible Camp Manitoulin Island, ON The theme is "Be Ye Transformed By the Renewing of Your Mind" The speakers will be Bro. Con Mitsos (Woodville, Australia) on the subject "Josiah the Great Reformer" and Bro. Roger Long (Grosvenor Road, UK) on the subject "From Upper Room to Resurrection". More details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or 416-284-0290.

29-Aug 4 Rogue River Bible School at Union Creek, OR. Speakers are Bro. Stephen Mansfield: "Peter, The Fragile Stone That Became An Immovable Rock"; Bro. David Jennings: "Scriptural Discipline"; Bro. Jim Cowie: "The Prophecy of Zephaniah". Contact: Sis. Liz Posey robandlizposey@gmail.com.

29-4 Aug Western Christadelphian Bible School at Menucha Camp near Portland, OR. Speakers are Bro. Darren Guy (Halifax, UK): "Wrestling With Jacob"; Bro. Duncan Kenzie (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "21st Century Discipleship"; Bro. Marco Dondero (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "The Prism of Judgement and Wisdom's Rainbow". Website www.menchabibleschool.org. Contact Sis. Jane Szabo, registrar, 541-563-4726.

AUGUST 2012

11-17 Niagara Falls Bible School Theme: "Whatever you do — Work as unto the Lord". Contact Bruce and Barb Abel at 519-925-5297 or at bnb69abel@hotmail.ca.

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

25-31 Vancouver Island Bible Camp at Camp Pringle on beautiful Shawnigan Lake. Speakers are Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Ezekiel — Son of Man"; Bro. Ian Dangerfield (Australia): "Crucified and Risen With Christ"; Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON): "Micah — To Do Justly, to Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly Before

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Your God". Contact information Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Rd., Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8. Phone: 250-758-4569 e-mail: yvonne2001@shaw.ca website: www.vibiblecamp.com.

SEPTEMBER 2012

9-14 Adult Study Week at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Ballinafad, ON. The week consists of daily interactive Bible study, taken from the last week of Christ's life. Workbooks will be available. Participants may use their own camping equipment, or the covered wagons on site. There are also motels available nearby. The facilities used are provided by Sis. Annette Milne. All meals will be provided. Contact Bro. Jack Robinson jcrobins@worldchat.com or Bro. Peter Stonell peter.maggiestonell@gmail.com.

15-16 Paris Avenue, OH Fall Study Weekend Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, Australia) will be speaking on "The Return of Christ".

OCTOBER 2012

6-7 Atlanta Area, GA Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON).

6-7 Sussex, NB Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD).

5-7 Washington, DC Music Study weekend. Theme: "Make the Voice of His Praise to be Heard!". Study leader will be Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. Contact Bro. David Perry dperry1@gmail.com.

13-14 Echo Lake, NJ Fall Study weekend. The speaker is Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) and his subject is "Promises of the Kingdom".

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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"A land which the Lord thy God careth for" ***(Deut 11:12)***

This is an arresting description of the Holy Land, and the place it occupies in the world geographically and historically is equally remarkable. As to location, it is central. Granted the realization of completed civilization in all the other lands, with accompanying perfected means of intercommunication, it would be better suited than any other place on earth for the seat of worldwide government. Under such conditions, thither would the tribes go up easily; and in the intellectual and spiritual light of its capital city, all the nations of the earth might walk; and into it, send their glory and their honor. Its history is covered by the naming of three names. Abraham, Moses, Jesus; these three forming a sequence in the Divine movements therein.

It is the land for which God careth. He makes it fruitful or barren. That is its story in the past. There can be no doubt in the mind of the student of these Holy Writings that it will yet be the earthly center of the Kingdom of God. On the slopes of Olivet the feet of the King shall yet actually stand, and from the city of the great King, the law shall yet go forth, in obedience to which man shall realize the highest of life.

G. Campbell Morgan

Editorial

Sadness — but Bitterness?

“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly¹ with me” (Ruth 1:20).

Bitterness

All down through the ages, mankind has expressed bitterness when calamity befalls them. Naomi expressed such bitterness at the death of her husband and two sons. It is indeed hard to avoid such a reaction, whether the situation is one that impacts you personally or one you love. There is a natural reaction to look for the reason behind the situation, as did the disciples when they came across a blind man.

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:1-3).

The disciples had two explanations: personal sin or inherited sin, but in modern times other reasons often occur to us. Society tends to look to assign blame (and obtain monetary compensation) whenever bad things happen. I had an accident recently that resulted in a broken bone in my leg: my insurance company wanted to know where the accident happened, whether it was on a sidewalk or someone’s property — presumably to investigate the possibility of assigning blame and then obtaining compensation from the property owner.

Thus the natural reaction of sadness and grieving over illness or death has, all too often, been replaced by bitterness and then by blaming inadequacies in medical care. To the explanation of “sin” suggested by the disciples, a modern questioner would surely add “or was it the fault of the doctors?” Medical “miracles” are expected: we commonly refuse to accept a terminal diagnosis, and expect the doctors to treat patients even when any rational being would accept the situation — but we are not rational about death.

But is such a reaction Biblical? Was Naomi right to be bitter? In both cases above, good came out of disaster. Naomi became an ancestor to David, and to his greater son. And the blind man was cured. In fact, the reason for the blindness was made clear: *“that the works of God should be made manifest in him”*. It is hard to accept God’s will, even though we know that sickness and death is our inevitable lot. *“Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5).* Repentance, belief in the truth, and baptism offer us the ultimate hope of resurrection, but brings no escape from sickness and death in this life.

It is very hard to accept that disease and death is a natural lot of mankind, common to all our race and an inevitable consequence of the sin of Adam, whose mortal nature we all inherit. It is also very difficult to accept that sometimes the purpose of God might require such illness as the blind man suffered. Disciples are not immune: sometimes indeed God sends us trials to prove our faith, as James tells us: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance”* (James 1:2-3). And sometimes, perhaps, when our work, or that of someone else is done, we cannot second guess the purpose of our Heavenly Father. It is hard to accept, as we look as to whether we or anyone else could have prevented a sad outcome, but sometimes our work is done. *“And [Job] said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”* (Job 1:21).

Does God preserve Christadelphians?

In any disaster in our days, wherever in the world it occurs, we are quick to check on the safety of any Christadelphians that might have been affected. The Christadelphian Internet sites are alive with information, and we are naturally often happy to know that all our brethren and sisters are safe — often followed by an outpouring of monetary help to assist with the material needs of the victims, and prayers and praises for the safety of those involved. There seems to be an implied belief that God protects His own from such disasters.

Indeed, there was an idea prevalent in the brotherhood early in WWII that God’s protection would be afforded to His children and that if we had faith we should be in some way immune from the effects of the bombing. One brother actually wrote a hymn called “London, night-bombers overhead”, based on Psa 91, to the effect that the Lord would preserve those who trusted in Him. “A thousand shall fall at thy right hand, and ten thousand at thy left, but it shall not come nigh thee...” was the implication, but events proved that in fact David’s dictum was nearer the truth — *“the sword devoureth one as well as another”*. For there were many casualties among Christadelphians from the bombings. There were many who were killed when their homes were blasted, and many who lost their homes and their health.²

The natural consequence is such feelings that, when automobile accidents take one of our own, or a similar fatal outcome is the result of some other episode, we wonder “what happened?” How could such a disaster strike a faithful Christadelphian? How can a person be struck down in their youth, or even middle age, before they have had an opportunity to serve God for any length of time? Is it something they did, or someone else did? And such we feel bitterness and look for some cause, some way to assign blame, some source to which we can assign bitterness.

Why does God allow pain and suffering?

The easy answer is basically as follows:

- 1) God gave man free will, so that he would have the opportunity to love.
- 2) Man chose hatred rather than love, thus bringing suffering (much of which is man-made) into the world.

- 3) Death puts an end to both sin and suffering. It is God's way of wiping out of existence those who do not choose to love Him.
- 4) But there is a hope of life after death for those who do try to love God.

But there is a further aspect: there is a purpose to the life of everyone, whether it is obvious or not. All work to the greater glory of God, knowingly or not. Jesus knew his purpose, and accepted great suffering and death for it.

"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son' " (Heb 12:2-6 NIV).

Let us remember that, in our grief and sadness at the passing of one we love, we ought not to fall into bitterness, either at ones we might be inclined to blame or at the reality of death itself. There is a sure hope for those who endure to the end: eternal life, free of suffering, death, and sorrow that is our present lot. Despite what we might expect, as Solomon put it:

"...the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them" (Eccl 9:11-12).

Finally, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph 4:31).

Peter Hemingray

Postscript: after writing this, Bro. Bob Lloyd sent me his latest "Minute Meditation" for inclusion in this issue, which addresses a similar matter.

Notes:

1. The Hebrew word transliterated "Mara" means bitterness.
2. This paragraph is adapted from Bro. Len Richardson's book, *Sixty years a Christadelphian*.

**Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org.
Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone.**

**Submissions under 300 words are encouraged
— the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions
for length and clarity.**

Exhortation

A Flight to Massachusetts

The flight

For today's exhortation, I am going to ask you to remember your own experiences during any commercial flight these days.

When you take a flight, your baggage is subject to inspection, which might make us recall the episode in Genesis when Jacob and his family leave, but Laban and his men come after them. Laban demands he be allowed to inspect all of Jacob's stuff and all the stuff of his household, and unbeknownst to Jacob, Rachel has carried away her family's idols. This is an event full of drama... especially, if carrying some contraband... secretly stowed away. We need to be careful what stuff we are carrying around when it comes time to be inspected. The Psalmist implores:

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psa 139:23-24).

Jeremiah instructs the people of God: *"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD"* (Lam 3:40).

He also reminds us: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I [The LORD] search[es] the heart, I [He will] try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings"* (Jer 17:9-10).

To begin our journey, to actually get on board, you need a boarding pass. Somewhat like baptism, which is needed to become "in Christ". Once on board, at least on Southwest Airlines, it is open seating, no first class, everyone is treated equally. Scripturally, in our life in the Truth, we too should not be a respecter of persons. That is to say, there is no class distinction, or at least there shouldn't be.

Next, one of the first things done as you ready to pull away from the gate: the flight attendant, who is familiar with the aircraft and the trip that you will be taking, provides you with instructions. Now, those that are frequent fliers have heard it all before, and by now are not listening to what is being said. Just look about you during the preflight instructions: most passengers do not bother to pay attention, let alone pull out the safety card and thoroughly inspect it. This card summarizes the flight attendant's pre-flight instructions. It has a list of instructions that we will now review.

For your safety, follow instructions, and study the contents of this card

Like this card, we have been given the Bible, which is full of instruction, yet few actually study the content of this card, especially, if a prior passenger has taken it for their sole possession. Likewise, God's Word is something that we should share with others. God's Word is not something we should hoard away like some precious

object, kept secret, safely locked away from prying eyes as if it were something that can be taken from us. Ironically, in this instance, the more we share the more we gain, and it is important that we pass on this life saving information to others. It should be shared and NOT something kept solely to ourselves. Paul instructs Timothy and us: *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”* (1Tim 4:16). It’s important that we share God’s treasured Word. God’s Word is something that we are to search for as a hidden treasure and even be willing to sell all to acquire it — as if it were a pearl of great price. However, it is NOT something we should keep to ourselves, but something to share. Something that we should be sure we make available for other passengers on life’s journey.

Learn the location of ALL exits on this aircraft

Now, if the aircraft were to represent the Ecclesia, being in the plane would be a good thing and during the flight whatever you do, you do NOT want to exit the airplane. You would want to be on board when arriving at the final destination. Anyone ever missed a flight? I’ve come close. It is a horrible feeling when the gangway door is shut and you wanted to be on the other side. We should be reminded of the parable of the 10 virgins: when the door was shut, no amount of knocking got it to open again. Now, if you miss a scheduled flight, it may be a hassle and costly inconvenience, but at least you can always catch another, eventually. With the impending return of Christ, this will NOT be the case.

If the airplane were to represent the World, in the event of a crash or pending emergency situation, looking for a way out would be the appropriate course of action. During the preflight instructions, you are told that you should look for the location of the nearest exit to where you are seated. During your travels, you should know the location of the nearest exit, remembering that it may be behind you (i.e. you may need to turn around), and you should have an exit strategy in advance of the need. We need to always look for and to find a way of escape. Paul tells us

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry... The cup of blessing which we bless, Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1Cor 10:11-16).

We are all condemned to death if we do not find the way out of that condemnation. Being in Christ becomes our way of escape. We need to know where this door is and we need to know how to open it. If you are seated in a row that has a way of escape you take on a responsibility. A responsibility to make sure the exit is accessible, and also the responsibility to assist others so that they too can exit the stricken aircraft.

Comply with all signs and placards

We are given warning signs, and plenty of safety instructions to which we are to comply. Comply is an interesting word... for our own safety and salvation, we need to comply! It is not enough to know; one must also do. You must understand the dangers and avoid doing something that not only puts your life in jeopardy, but also the lives of those around us. The card reads "Keep your seatbelt fastened while seated". This is especially important if there are unexpected bumps along the way. Many flights encounter turbulence as does our course in life. "In the event that the plane should encounter a loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the ceiling above." You are instructed to save yourself first, and then assist those with whom you might be traveling who require assistance. At first, this may sound somewhat selfish; however, is really also in the best interest of your loved ones who you may be need to assist. Although Scripturally, we should esteem our brethren better than ourselves, we need take the necessary action for procuring our own the salvation, and then we are better equipped to assist those that are also in need.

Turn off all portable electronic devices before take-offs and landings

The next few items, which actually appear on the card, just go to show you how litigious our society has become.

"The following MAY BE operated at all times: **Electronic watches.**" We need to be aware of the time and the time is short, as the return of Christ is nearer now than when it was before. **Hearing aids.** I can just hear someone's defense now: "After the instruction to turn off all electronic devices, I did not hear any other instructions." Scripture warns us: "*those that have ears to hear, let them hear*", and "*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" The last electronic device listed that can remain on: **Pacemakers.** Yes, it reminds us that the time to listen and the time to act is while our heart is still beating, for there is no consciousness in the sleep of death. But there will come a time at the return of Christ when the dead will arise, and at the judgment seat of Christ, we will be asked to give account of your actions, whether good or bad.

In the event of an emergency evacuation, you are NOT to take your baggage with you

"And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; [When we consider the depravity occurring in Sodom and Gomorrah, we may be

lulled into thinking that we are NOT headed to such destruction. Again if we are not careful, we too may do nothing more than eat, drink, buy, sell, plant, and build... to the exclusion of God in our lives.] *"But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. [Remember that stuff should be left behind?] Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it"* (Luke 17:22-33).

We now come to the emblems on the table before for us. With these emblems, we remember an individual who accomplished all this and much more. We remember the life, death, and the triumphant resurrection of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Heb 12:2). Until the long awaited coming of our now absent Lord, we must continue on life's journey that remains before for us. We pray God's blessings will sustain us on that journey yet ahead. May we seek His guidance ever and avail ourselves of the help provided, while assisting those, like us, that journey toward His kingdom. May we consider our ways, doing all to the honor and glory of our Heavenly Father. May we heed instructions warning words; especially when those instructions are placed there to both warn and save.

Mark Wade (West Houston, TX)

Special Invitation

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

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
37th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 23-29, 2012.
Main Speakers are Bro. Mark Whittaker (UK) — "Getting to Know Ezekiel";
Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) — "Let This Mind Be in You: A Study of
Paul's letter to the Philippians"; and Bro. Roger Titman (Cleveland, OH) —
"James, Paul and the Jerusalem Council";
Special week-long evening series by Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) —
"In the Beginning, God Created"*

Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com
Visit our website <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org>

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel: (7) The Clouds of Heaven

Our continuing premise is how the spoken word of God (creation) is a veiled projection of divine truths and principles, the same truths and principles expressed in Scripture. Our consideration of the law and prophecies of the early and latter rains briefly referenced the identification of clouds as identifying the presence, power and glory of the Creator. This is a very basic understanding, as the evidence for this relationship saturates Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The cloud was the frame for the divine covenant symbol of the rainbow. According to Moses, even the pagans recognized Yahweh's presence in the cloud pillar hovering over the Tabernacle that led Israel through the wilderness (Num 14:14). The divine presence in the cloud filled the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple at their dedications, being expressed as Yahweh's glory. The Heavenly Father speaks from the cloud at the transfiguration mount. Luke's account describes how the cloud enveloped all seven on that mount (Christ, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, John and God). Jesus left earth for the right hand of his Father in a cloud (appropriately) and returns with power and glory in the 'clouds' of heaven. A cloud is the clothing of the rainbowed angel (immortalized saints) in Revelation 10, which is a snapshot of the atonement when the divine nature will cover the faithful with immortality (1Cor 15:51-54; 2Cor 5:1-4).

Caught in the cloud and the air on the Transfiguration Mount

This subtle consistency of the identification of clouds with the presence, power, nature and glory of our Creator invites us to examine the shadows of Scripture for its hidden light. Just as our Creator took light out of darkness (2Cor 4:6), so we are invited to draw light out of the shadow lessons of divine expressions, pursuing our Heavenly Father's image and likeness. We noted how the cloud from which Yahweh spoke on the mount of transfiguration fully embraced Christ, the living and the dead (Luke 9:34). Paul expresses this same image in his letter to the Thessalonians, a reference dramatically wrested by the serpent philosophy based religious orders of the flesh.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thess 4:16-18).

The image on the transfiguration mount perfectly matches Paul's comments. Peter, James, John, Moses and Elijah were with Jesus in the air and in the mount and in the cloud. It was the promise of an immortal transfiguration for all those 'in' Christ when he returns with our heavenly reward to clothe the faithful with the

heavenly tabernacle made without hands (2Cor 5:1-4) and the eternal abiding places (mansions, John 14:1-3,23) prepared for us and what Paul calls our *citizenship* reserved in heaven (Phil 3:20-21). This is the reward Jesus will bring with him to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev 22:12). Meeting our Lord in the air and the clouds is the image of immortalization. This is why the faithful in Hebrews 11 are identified as a great *cloud* of witnesses (Heb 12:1). Along with the Thessalonian Ecclesia they await the awarding of the cloud nature promised on the Mount of Transfiguration when the living and the dead were caught up in the clouds and the air with Christ.

The cloud generated by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement to save his life confirms this promise of the cloud nature.

*“And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, **that he die not**” (Lev 16:12-13).*

This is the first of the three events inside the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement. These three events portray the three immortalization events in the divine plan: (1) Jesus Christ; (2) the extended family of the High Priest at the beginning of the millennial Kingdom and (3) the rest of the world at the end of the millennial Kingdom. These three immortalization events are shadowed for the exclusive witness of those with seeing eyes and hearing ears in other divine rituals, such as the three great feast weeks at the three primary harvest stages: Feast of Unleavened Bread: barley and flax; Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits: wheat; Feast of Tabernacles: vineyard.

Dust nature to cloud nature ... by fire

The High Priest must first take two handfuls of incense into the Most Holy and toss the incense onto the flames to transfigure the dust into a cloud that covers the mercy seat, by the action of the fire. This is a detailed image of the atonement or immortalization of our Messiah. Incense was made by pulverizing four equal spice ingredients into a fine powder. Dust is, of course, a symbol of mortal nature as Adam was made from the dust of the earth and we are consigned back to that dust by the terms of the curse of sin and death. However, this is not just any dust. It is a sweet smelling dust, reflecting the divinely approvable behavior pattern of our Messiah before his transfiguration from dust to cloud through the fire. The four aromatic dust components in each hand of the High Priest parallel other double four salvation shadows. The four men and four women on the gopher wood ark of salvation, the two sets of four stone surfaces upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant (10 commandments) and the two rows of four carcasses in Abram's heaven and earth covenant (Gen. 15), the foursquare altar with the four blood sacrifice categories (burnt, peace, sin and trespass), the outer and inner foursquare configuration of Israel surrounding the Tabernacle (political exterior and spiritual interior), and the four cherubim with four wings with the four wheels within four wheels. These all serve to present a divine pattern of doubled fours in the context of a salvation theme. These are only a few of the

many examples of this Scriptural pattern within a pattern.

The two handfuls of incense are converted by the fire into a cloud. The fire serves as the conversion process, presenting the image of the salvation of our Messiah through the suffering of his death. The transfiguration from aromatic dust to aromatic cloud portrays the change from cursed mortal nature to blessed immortal nature. Appropriately, this action saves the life of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. This confirms our understanding that this first Day of Atonement ritual foreshadows the eternal saving of the life of the ultimate High Priest. This personal atonement of our Messiah is shadowed in other divine rituals, such as the atonement for the Christ-altar over seven days so that this altar might be used for the congregation (Exod 29:36-37). This creational cloud projection of the nature of our Creator is consistently presented throughout Scripture. These thoughts are merely a meditational seed offering the promise for a greater harvest, of witnessing a greater measure of divine glory reserved exclusively for seeing eyes and hearing ears.

Our next commentary will extend this water/word relationship to the spiritual application of bodies of water. This will hint at the immense depth and breadth of how Creation's gospel confirms divine truths and principles.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

The Questions We Ask

Part 1

As teachers we ask many different kinds of questions. Some require our students to recall information; some require them to understand concepts; others require them to apply principles, and still others require them to exercise good judgment.

In the process of his teaching, Jesus asked all of these kinds of questions and more. Try this little exercise to see some of the kinds of questions that Jesus asked. Which of the following questions requires the learner to *recall* basic facts? Which ones require *comprehension*? Which one calls for immediate *application*, and which one is a vital *evaluation* (i.e., judgment) question?

And he said:

"Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? ..." (Matt 15:16-18).¹

"When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" (Mark 8:19).

"Who do the crowds say that I am?" ... "But who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:18, 20).

“When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, ‘Do you understand what I have done to you?’” (John 13:12, 15).

It is not entirely easy to analyze these, is it? The questions that Jesus asked were sophisticated. The question from Mark’s Gospel is a *recall* question, and the first question from Luke’s Gospel requires *recall* as well. The question from John’s Gospel requires *comprehension* before disciples can put a demonstrated principle into practice (*application*). And, although it may seem like a very simple question for us to answer, the second question from Luke’s Gospel demands the very best *observation and evaluation* skills possible.

The point of this exercise is to recognize that Jesus asked questions that called for a wide range of thinking skills. In other words, Jesus required his ‘students’ to use their heads, and to use them to the very best of their abilities! Even when Jesus asked a simple recall question, the answer was never an end in itself. It was always a springboard to something more probing and profound as Mark 8:20-21 illustrates.

What is particularly important for us as Sunday school teachers is to recognize *why* Jesus asked the questions he did. What was he trying to accomplish when he asked a question? Often the answers to his questions are extremely simple: each of the questions above can be answered in one or two words! But the implications are life changing.

Never a pointless question

Teachers ask a lot of questions, and Jesus was no exception. He was an absolute master of the questioning process. And he never asked a pointless question.

Look at the questions that Jesus posed in the Sermon on the Mount. His teaching method in this case was one of discourse, not dialogue, so his ‘students’ — his disciples, Matthew 5:1 — probably did not get to answer him directly. They had to remember the questions that he posed and ponder the answers for themselves. Reflective disciples do this!

Here are some of his Sermon questions. Answer them for yourself. Try answering each question in five words or less. It can be done!

- *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (Matt 5:13).*
- *“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Matt 6:25).*
- *“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matt 6:26).*
- *“Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” (Matt 6:27).*
- *“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matt 6:30).*

- “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” (Matt 7:3).
- “You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matt 7:16).²

Not one of the answers to these questions is an end in itself. What is the point of the Lord’s questions, then? It is the personal implications of the answers that matter. If you and I know that life is more than food and the body is more than clothing, why are diet and fashion so incredibly important to us, and what are we doing with our lives and our bodies?

If we are reflective disciples, our Lord’s questions lead us to contemplate the most fundamental things of life: what we are like, what God is like, our relationship to God; our priorities, trust, worry, self-(un)reliance.

And in the process of contemplation, we need to recognize our need to change. The point of the Lord’s questions is to make us better people before God; to make us better disciples of the Teacher.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

What is the point of the questions we ask?

The education that Jesus provides is dynamic.

“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17).

By comparison, Western education can be very academic, all but detached from daily life in many instances. Most of us are products of Western education and we replicate it in our own teaching. Because of this, there is almost certainly room for us to re-examine the questions that we ask our Sunday school students and evaluate just how much they really contribute to the development of discipleship.

The value of the questions we ask is not measured so much by the ‘right answers’ as it is by their ability to change lives, the more so as our children grow up.

Recall questions are valuable and important as long as we understand that the answers are not an end in themselves. A recall question, at the moment it is asked, can measure a bit of current Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge is good, but at the end of the day it is what a person does with their Bible knowledge that matters. The nature of our questions needs to mature with our students; or, more precisely, we need to help our students mature with the questions we ask them.

Questions that require our students to articulate their understanding (*comprehension*) of Bible principles in their own words, and questions that ask them how they would personally apply Bible principles in a given situation (*application*) help move them along the road of discipleship. Beyond this, questions that encourage them to *willingly do discipleship* in some way or another can begin to move Sunday schooling out of the purely academic realm and into the dynamic, living realm of the Lord Jesus.

Are we getting what we ask for?

Questions measure something. Good questions can give us useful insight into the knowledge and thinking of our students. But do the questions we ask always do this?

Years ago, I used a formal Sunday school curriculum with a class of teenage students. Each lesson had questions that went with it, and, week by week, it was my students' job to read an assigned lesson and write answers to the questions.

One of my young students was extremely conscientious about doing her Sunday school homework. She turned in pages of written work every week. But her answers to the questions were uncharacteristically eloquent. The reason for this was not hard to find. The questions that accompanied each lesson were always *fully answered* in the lesson itself. All a student had to do was find the right place in the lesson and copy out the answer — *in someone else's words*. My little girl had quite innocently caught on how to do this.

The lessons and questions were designed so that a student could work the system. If you got really good at it, it wasn't necessary to read the entire lesson in order to answer the questions. Answering questions was simply a process to be carried out, and doing homework was a job to accomplish; at least it was easy for my students to see it that way. As the teacher, I did not get a useful insight into the mind of my little girl, except, perhaps, to find out that she was pretty clever and that she seemed anxious to please me. It was the mind of *the lesson writer* that she was presenting to me, and there was no way for me to know, from her homework at least, whether she understood or agreed with it.

We need to do a thoughtful — and often more thought-provoking — job with the questions we ask. The education of disciples calls for it.

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Notes:

1. All references are from the ESV.
2. Here is how I answer these questions: Matt 5:13, It can't be; Matt 6:25, Yes; Matt 6:26, Yes; Matt 6:27, Nobody can; Matt 6:30, Yes; Matt 7:3, Because I am self-centered; Matt 7:16, No.

Youth Speaks

1 Thessalonians 5 — A Time for Preparation

Paul concludes his first letter to the ecclesia of Thessalonica with words of strength to continue the struggle and persevere until the day of Christ's return. How appropriate that we can find the same exact lesson nearly two millennia later. Paul, believing in the possibility of the Son's return in his own lifetime (1Thess 4:15), would have made it his main ambition to encourage and lead as many to salvation as he could in the limited time he had. The letter to the Thessalonian ecclesia shows just that. How thrilling would it have been to receive a hand written letter from the Apostle Paul in which his prime purpose for writing was to zealously

remind them that the Lord's return was imminent! Paul stresses to the brothers and sisters the difference between a God-fearing individual and a world-serving one. He uses the analogy of light and darkness, an echo ringing throughout Scripture, of the seed of the woman warring against the seed of the serpent. Paul concludes his letter with instructions to the Thessalonians on how to remain upright and righteous in the last days.

The lesson is no different for us, who truly are only moments away from Christ's triumphant return where he will resurrect those of Thessalonica and all others who have fallen asleep in him, and after "*we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord*" will join with them for that glorious occasion. As we dive into the final chapter of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, let us bear in mind the application for us.

The return of the Son

Paul begins the final chapter with words of irony and rebuke. Paul had spent much of his time teaching to them matters of prophecy and things concerning the coming of the Lord and that subject still occupies most of their time. He starts with the words *times* and *seasons*. Two fairly similar words in the Greek — *times* (*kronos*) and *seasons* (*kairos*). *Kronos* denotes an interval or length of time. *Kairos* on the other hand means a setting, and it's suitability for an event. In this context, he is referring to the length of time until the return of Christ, and what the times will be like. Christ had indeed already warned the 12 apostles at his ascension the fruitlessness of trying to calculate the exact moment (Acts 1:7). Paul goes on to rebuke the Thessalonians by saying "*ye have no need that I write unto you*". He had spent enough conversation on the topic of prophecy, and Paul tries to convey to the ecclesia that they needed to be more worried about their lives in the Truth than the exact time of Christ's arrival. He continues the discussion into the next verse where his emphasis is on the suddenness and unexpected nature of the return. Still speaking with a touch of irony, the apostle states, "*For yourselves know perfectly*". Indeed they did. As already stated, Paul emphasized enough on the subject in his visit, yet here they are still chasing a question without an achievable answer. Now, we can clearly see the problem with this, but it is important to take a step back and look at our lives. The same lesson that this ecclesia had to learn must be learned by us. We cannot obsess over insolvable riddles, and spend our time with figures and dates: instead our labor must be that of a patient servant. Let us look at the signs of the times for encouragement and motivation, but at the same time, sharpen each other and keep our lamps trimmed and full of oil for the time of which only our God in heaven knows, but which he will shortly reveal to His Son.

Paul refers to this day as the "*day of the Lord*" as we continue in the second verse. So many times does this phrase occur that it may have lost its power. It is a day that is almost here, a day in which Christ will come to this earth once more and begin the work of filling it with his Father's glory. This day, as Paul describes it, will come "*as a thief in the night*". Night is the time of slumber, a time of bewilderment and confusion, a time which people imagine as a time of "*peace and safety*". It is a time that Scripture always uses in context of servants who have been instructed to

watch. A thief strikes at night, when those who are not prepared will not see what the thief has done, until it is too late. It fits perfectly with those of us waiting. How many of us truly are prepared for Christ's return, how many of us, at the *day of the Lord*, will be ready and waiting? The words of Christ ring true: "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments*" (Rev 16:15). Paul was worried about the budding ecclesia in Thessalonica and was encouraging them to stay on the path toward the kingdom and not stray. When our lives get a little too comfortable, this is the time of danger, this is the time the apostle warns us of — it is a time similar to childbirth. An expectant mother does not know when labor may begin but she does know it is about to happen. The event is inevitable, and a mother who is ill-prepared is in great danger.

Walk in the light and be prepared

The next set of verses is a reminder and a warning to the ecclesia of Thessalonica and to us to stay separate from the evils of this world, and be of the light. Scripture uses the examples of light and darkness over and over to demonstrate how that which is good is the complete opposite from that which is evil. Paul again brings in the analogy of the thief. He tells them that they should have no excuse to be caught by surprise in the night by the thief. He calls them "*the children of light, and the children of the day*," as opposed to children of the night who are of darkness and of whom the thief will overtake. Those who are of the night, find themselves all too often "asleep" or unprepared. This is the last position Paul wants this new ecclesia to find themselves in. Instead he instructs them to "*watch and be sober*". The word sober has a meaning of "to be in control of one's own self". The brothers and sisters were not in any way supposed to be drunk with intoxicating thoughts and actions of the world.

To defend against these things Paul goes on to say that those who have not fallen into darkness must put on "*the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*". The breastplate and helmet were the two most important pieces of armor a soldier could wear. Protecting the head and the critical organs of the chest, a soldier with these pieces of armor had a much greater chance of victory.

In the same context, he gives the three vital characteristics and defenses of a soldier in Christ. "*Faith, hope, and love*," an echo from other Scriptures and also an echo from the beginning of this letter (1 Thess 1:3). Having put on faith, hope, and love, the soldier of Christ will escape the wrath to come and to rather "*obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*"(v. 9). The gift of salvation is in no wise something that can be earned. As the apostle stresses here, it is a gift that was only made possible by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul ends this section with strengthening words of comfort. He states that it was because of this sacrifice that those who have died will join those who are alive, and together they will live with their Savior. Verse 11 concludes the section with words that ring just as true now as they did then: "*comfort yourselves together, and edify one another*". What encouraging words from Paul to us! Take comfort in the thought that Christ is nearly here. Strengthen and edify your brothers and sisters in these final days.

Final remarks and responsibilities

Paul's final section of the letter is a list of instructions and responsibilities of which the new ecclesia needed to adhere to as they waited with great anticipation their Lord's return. Looking at verse 12 now, we have the apostle beseeching the brethren. He turns his emotions to a plea now, instead of a command. He begs the ecclesia to admire and support the brethren who lead them. Paul refers to these leaders as "laborers". They did have positions of leadership and power, but the ecclesia was to respect these people for their laboring in the truth. And through the support they were to give and their admonition and love, the laboring leaders would continue to labor and continue to serve the ecclesia.

As we move into verse 14, Paul begins his list of responsibilities. As his letter was coming to an end, he saved the most vital lessons for last. He wanted the ecclesia of Thessalonica to remember these duties and these responsibilities first and foremost. Just as we would finish a letter with the wrap-up comments to sum up what we had written, so Paul does the same. If they were to get anything from the letter, here is what would be most beneficial to themselves on their walk, and to their new ecclesia as they together waited for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first duty in verse 14 states "*warn them that are unruly*". Unruly brothers and sisters would be counterproductive in the ecclesia. He warns them to counsel those brethren who try to halt the work, stir up trouble, or gossip one among one another. If the ecclesia was to progress, these brothers and sisters needed to be warned against this kind of action. "*Comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men*" or "comfort the fainthearted, support those who are struggling in the faith, and show patience toward all". Paul is trying to get the entire ecclesia involved in this building up of the spiritual household. Those who are new to the truth, those who have difficulties, or those who find certain beliefs confusing — these are the people whom Paul encourages the stronger members of the ecclesia to search out and comfort. Continuing into verse 15, Paul instructs the ecclesia that they don't repay evil for evil to any man, which included those not in the ecclesia. Verses 16-22 include some straightforward lessons for the brothers and sisters. "*Rejoice evermore.*" As this new ecclesia began growing, it was a time of great excitement. Paul warns them, though, that tough times lay ahead. Even through these tough times, they were told to rejoice. What a lesson for us! In our world today, rarely do things go the way we would like them to go, yet, these issues are insignificant in the grand view of things. "*Pray without ceasing.*" A servant of God must live his life as if he is God's presence at all times. To pray without ceasing is impossible, but the lesson is the same. We are always seen of God, and to lose communication with him is the same as straying in our walk. "*In everything give thanks.*" We often find ourselves neglecting to thank our Father enough. He has indeed given us every single thing. Paul here, though, is stressing the fact that not only are we supposed to give God thanks for the things we enjoy, but also for the things that cause us grief or trial. For these issues are the things that straighten us out and keep us in the way. "*Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.*" In the ecclesial life in Paul's day, there were the apostles — and Paul himself — who had the power of the Holy Spirit and the gift of prophesying. Paul

urges them to stand up to those Pharisees, scribes, and elders who would want to ban such acts. Paul states that the Holy Spirit should not be quenched but rather respected. *“Prove all things.”* They were commanded to prove whether these Holy Spirit gifts were genuine or false. Many people may have tried to imitate these miracles and would have drawn away brethren from the Truth. The lesson can be tied to our lives as well. Search out the Scriptures for yourself. In these final days, we have to watch for the wolves in sheep’s clothing trying to take us away from the flock. *“Hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”* Humanism is a deadly religion that is creeping into our ecclesias and threatening to violently rip them apart. We can witness this all around. Paul saw this coming in his time and it is certainly true in our time as well. We have been warned and instructed to hold fast to that which is right. Do not let the purity of the Truth slip away. Hold on to it and do not let this go. He goes so far as to say, stay away from **any** appearance of evil. Eternal life in service to our father is not something that should be toyed with.

The conclusion

As Paul inserts the final words into his first letter to Thessalonica, he chooses his words with the utmost of care. Here is an ecclesia that is just learning and developing; these words from the apostle would be the very words of encouragement they needed to get through the rugged road ahead. *“The very God of peace;”* just as Paul opened his letter in verse 1, so he concludes it with *“peace”*. Knowing that a time of peace was promised to them that believe, the war in ourselves may more easily be won. *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Here we have the spirit, soul, and body, all acting together. The spirit (*pneuma*) is the mind of the believer, the soul (*psuche*) is the individual and their personal psyche, and the body (*soma*) is the shell that contains our “soul” and our “mind”. It is the dust that makes up our carcass. Our entire being must remain holy until Christ returns. Christ will judge us according to how all three parts have acted. A servant will not be accepted into the Kingdom if his soul and body have somehow remained separate but his spirit has indulged in the immorality of the world. Our entire being must remain steadfast until the coming of His Kingdom.

Moving to verse 25, *“Brethren, pray for us”*. There is no argument against Paul being an extraordinary brother, but he, just as we all, needed strength and guidance in the remaining years of his life. Just as he no doubt prayed for every single ecclesia, so he asked for their prayers as well. *“Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.”* A kiss is a deeper sign of appreciation. The brothers and sisters were now a family in their Lord. *“This epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.”* Paul included so many lessons in his letter. Lessons for the righteous, the unrighteous, the knowledgeable and the young, the dedicated and also the unmotivated. Having this letter read to all would put the brethren in the ecclesia on common grounds. They would have guidance for difficult situations — situations Paul knew would arise in the future. As these same situations arise in our ecclesias, may we also look to the Scriptures for the answers instead of our own personal beliefs or opinions or emotions. *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”* Nearly identical to the words

he began with, so he ends. The grace which has been granted each and every one of us, may we not take it for granted, but instead live our lives in accordance with the Word of God — so that in that day, *“we which are alive and remain”* may live and reign with our Lord Jesus Christ for the Kingdom age.

Jason Robinson (Thousand Oaks, CA)

Comfort in Christ’s Return — 2 Thessalonians 1

Introduction to the Second Letter

It’s often hard to imagine the physical persecution that the brothers and sisters of Paul’s day had to endure. Many parts of the world today live in places that foster freedom of religion and freedom to express it. That was not the case around AD 52-53, when this epistle was written. One of the main reasons that Paul penned this second epistle was to encourage the brothers and sisters to endure these trials and tribulations. Paul’s prayer was *“...that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (2Thess 1:11-12).¹

Paul also wanted to clear up any false expectations of the early coming of the Lord. The people of Thessalonica believed that Christ would return soon to establish the Kingdom on earth, which in turn would alleviate them from their sufferings. Paul did not want them to become discouraged when Christ’s return did not come as anticipated. These expectations stemmed from false teachers as Paul explained:

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...” (2Thess 2:1-3).

The overall message of the second epistle is to encourage the brothers and sisters with the second coming of Christ. Paul reminds them of the victory that will take place when this happens and the reward that accompanies it for those who have suffered righteously in Christ’s name. Paul encourages them to be patient in 2Thess 3:5: *“Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ”*.

As we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us remain focused on the reward and patiently endure to the end.

Focusing on the return of Christ

Paul begins the second epistle in identical fashion to the first epistle. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy had originally brought the gospel to Thessalonica and now address the ecclesia a second time. Paul said:

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love,

and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father” (1Thess 1:2-3).

There is very little difference to the commendation he gives here:

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure” (2Thess 1:3-4).

Notice that Paul emphasizes that the brothers and sisters were doing well at continuing to grow in the aspects of love, patience and faith. Their faith continued to grow and because of that, other aspects of their worship flourished as well. Faith must be alive and active before it can grow. Paul had previously conveyed that he wanted to return to them and strengthen their faith (1Thess 3:10), but was now grateful that their faith had grown in his absence. This faith, coupled with patience, was used by the Thessalonians to endure persecutions and tribulations.

Paul continues to acknowledge their answer to his prayer when he commends them for the love that abounded toward each other. Paul says, *“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1Thess 3:12-13).* The word for “love” in this case is “*agape*,” which is self-sacrificing love. This is the type of love that our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated when he hung on the tree as our Passover lamb. For this, the Thessalonians were praised by Paul.

It’s often a mistaken principle in the world around us that persecutions and tribulations show God’s apathy or lack of love. Even within our own mind we can see this thinking. Often times we go through a trial and think “how can God let this happen?” In reality, we’re told that God does this so that we might be drawn closer to Him.

“...My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons” (Heb 12:5-8).

Indeed, this is exactly what the Thessalonians were able to accomplish through their trials. They allowed themselves to be as sons and daughters to God and to remain focused on the imperishable crown that awaited them.

In the following verses, Paul describes for them the divine judgment that would occur at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul reveals to them that when Christ returns, that he will punish those who have brought trouble onto the believers. Paul delivers the same message: *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom 12:19).* Later in Romans 12, Paul encourages them to love their enemies, to

provide physical refreshment to them and to overcome evil with good. By doing so, they would lift themselves higher than those around them and would be able to focus on the reward that awaited their patient enduring.

Paul describes the judgment on these ungodly men and women who persecuted the believers in verses 8-10. Paul says in verse 9, *“These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...”*. With much anticipation the Thessalonians waited for the second coming of the Lord Jesus as we do today. But with this expectation of his return, they prepared in a way so that this judgment would not be their fate. Their faith grew, their love for one another grew and their patience abounded in tribulations. They were able to put on the collective fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Let this be a lesson to us as we live in a period where the world is continuously trying to pull us away from the commands of God to a lifestyle that will soon be destroyed with everlasting destruction.

On the contrary, Paul describes the divine glory on those who obey God’s commands as sons and daughters (2Thess 1:10). The apostle John does the same.

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1John 3:2-3).

If it is our hope to be made like Christ at his coming. We too need to be purifying ourselves in these last days. We too must be using our time now to serve the Lord, to bring honor and glory to his name like the Thessalonians did. Paul was able to boast of them to other ecclesias as an example of brothers and sisters who endured trial and tribulation faithfully. Their faith grew in a very trying time period, where men and women were physically persecuting them for what they believed. We have been given plenty of opportunity to express our love for God in the way that we live. Can we say that others boast because of our faith?

Paul ends the chapter with a prayer. He says: *“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2Thess 1:11-12).* These men and women had already attained much in their walks toward God’s Kingdom, but there was still room for improvement and growth. We know that it is only through the mercy of our Heavenly Father that we are to be granted a place in that Kingdom age, but we need to be doing our part now. Just as the Thessalonians were praised for their continuation of Paul’s instruction in the first epistle, we too need to be growing in faith as we continue to be instructed by God’s word.

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Notes:

1. All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (6) Guidleline #5: Becoming *Simpatico*

It has been said that marriage in this era is regarded as a relationship where one deserves to *find* love rather than a path for *giving* love.¹ When this expectation is not fulfilled to one's satisfaction, many men and women feel justified in walking out on the relationship. Needless to say these days, a significant number of men and women simply co-habitat and never bother to marry legally, which makes splitting up even easier, since a permanent sense of commitment is lacking from the inception of the liaison. This is a reflection on what we have already discussed namely, the emphasis that our society places on self-fulfillment: its all about *me*. The institution of marriage is a God given plan and was intended from the very beginning to be between one man and one woman, *for life*. Hence, when one walks out on a marriage, or enters into a promiscuous relationship without any lifelong commitment intended — then the commandment of the Lord God is being broken.

“He (Jesus) said 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, see also Mark 10:5).²

And Jesus went on to explain why divorce is so serious:

“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” (v. 19). A clear case of breaking the commandment: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14).

Sad to say that of all of God's commandments, the one on the sanctity of marriage is the one most frequently broken by a vast number of people in our society.³ If we accept the approximately 50% divorce rate as a reality, then just imagine what America would be like if the same rate of disobedience to the Lord's commands applied to the commandments “*You shall not murder*” (Exod 20:13) or “*You shall not steal*” (Exod 20:15). Try to visualize a situation where half the people in America were murderers, or thieves; even in some of the most dangerous places in the world such drastic numbers don't apply. The consequences of ignoring the commandment on marriage being a lifelong commitment have had an insidious effect on our whole society in terms of the social consequences. This result has created a whole generation of damaged lives, and a multitude of dysfunctional children. God gave the commandment on marriage not just for the sake of individual couples, but also as a bulwark to bolster the whole fabric of society. No one can doubt that when a marriage breaks down in our own community the consequences not only affects the pair involved, but often also the whole Ecclesial world far and near.

Surprisingly, in one recent survey noted in a previous article,⁴ the most frequently cited reasons for seeking divorce were: “Growing Apart” cited by 55% and “Unable to Talk Together” by 52.7% of the respondents. This can compared with:

“Drug and Alcohol Problems” 22.3% and “Physical Violence” 12.7%. While the latter two reasons present extreme difficulties in a relationship⁵ it would seem that the first two cited should be more amenable to a cure. Nevertheless, this is hardly trivial, because it has been my observation that these two most often cited reasons build up over many years. By the time the rupture in the marriage occurs, the chasm between the partners will often have grown so deep and wide that it is almost impossible to crossover and reach an accommodation. The best measure to prevent failure in the long term is to develop effective communication from the very beginning, starting during the courtship phase and, as occasions arise, being willing to do hard committed work to preserve the relationship throughout the entire course of a married lifetime. *Simpatico* is the word I will use for describing a close marital bond where open effective communication is the rule in the relationship and not the exception.

What do I mean by a couple being *simpatico*? The word obviously has been picked up from the Italian language, but without quite catching the full shade of meaning attached to it in that culture. The primary meaning is not “sympathy” as some English dictionary sources imply. Perhaps the best way to understand what this word represents in terms of marriage I will refer to a Scriptural definition rather than one from a language dictionary. Consider the following passages:

“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” and “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me” (Song 6:3, 7:10).

“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph 5:33).

It is all about mutual admiration, respect, companionship and friendship, or as sometimes poetically stated: *two hearts beating as one*. To develop and maintain such a close relationship in a marriage takes continual attention spread over a lifetime. The key to success is open communication. Other things that go into being *simpatico* are kindness, consideration, gentleness, forgiveness and recalling and practicing the same relationship standards that you both had when you were courting. Little things like remembering birthdays, anniversaries etc., and sometimes just bringing flowers or chocolates for her for no reason at all — except wanting to please her and showing appreciation. On her part it may involve preparing a special meal⁶ or planning a weekend getaway for the two of you — such efforts are an integral part of being *simpatico*.

If effective communication is the key what does it unlock? We are all a product of our upbringing and all of us carry baggage into a marriage; some of it bright and shiny and other packages tarnished and dented. The lock is the one on the door to our inner most thoughts; that part of us which we often find so hard to share with another. Behind that door we concealed the baggage that carries our childhood fears, bad habits and inherited traits, good or bad. Consider the following Scripture:

“That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1Tim 6:18 KJV; see also Heb 13:16).

The ESV renders the last part of this verse as “...ready to share”, since the original

Greek word for being communicative has a sense of one being a “*sharer, companion, partner*”.⁷ Thus, the Apostle is exhorting us to doing good, being generous and willing to share what we have. What better way to put this into effect, first and foremost, than in a marriage? Doing this goes a long way to being *simpatico*. The things that need to be shared above all else are our thoughts, feelings, foibles, concerns, dreams, hopes and promises. It is unfortunate that so often we may feel our partner should know something — as if by osmosis! My observation is that my wife is far more sensitive to things and can catch on to a need or desire without a word being spoken between us. While I am often a clod! Maybe this is just us, but I have a feeling from long observation of other married couples that this may be a more general phenomenon; namely, women are often more sensitive and men often oblivious to the emotions and needs of their spouse. Obviously, there are probably many exceptions to these general conclusions, nevertheless I am fairly certain that if this were true in a relationship then it would behoove the wife to be more explicit in her wants and needs and the husband should train himself to actually listen!

Some very sound advice was given to the Ephesians: “*Let no corrupt communication [“talk” in the ESV] proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*” (Eph 4:29 KJV). Communication can rarely be effective when the volume level between married partners exceeds the power of a Verdi triumphal chorus, or when it awakens half the neighborhood. Learning to “fair fight”, as most marriage literature describes it, can contribute immensely to solving conflicts without undue emotional distress. Here is where the Apostle’s advice about communication “...*that it may give grace to those who hear*” (Eph. 4:29) really comes into play. When an issue comes up that can lead to potential conflict, sometimes the best way to discuss it is to sit down with cups of coffee, or tea and a biscuit or two, and let your partner speak without interrupting. Furthermore, it doesn’t necessarily follow that if you are right, in the absolute sense of the word, or even if you think your way is more logical, it does not automatically make it a better spiritual solution. Recall, “*love does not insist on its own way*”⁸ and rarely is there a perfect resolution to a problem anyway. Sometimes good enough *is enough!* This verse also highlights another aspect of becoming *simpatico* using our speech to edify, i.e. build up our partner not tear them down. There is nothing sadder than overhearing a couple verbally stab at each other with their tongues. Using the expression “you always do that” is another non-starter and reminding your partner of all their other faults that are not germane to the issue at hand will get one nowhere fast.

It is unrealistic to expect any marriage to sail along forever without hitting some rough waters from time to time. Conflict is part of our nature⁹ and we need to recognize that, when this happens, we must not try to resolve it by destroying the character and ego of our partner. Only a person who has completely given up their own identity would be able to give in to every conflict that may arise in the course of two people living together. That’s a form of abuse and a subject for another article. One of the underlying reasons for conflict naturally comes from different relationship experiences we had while growing up. To cite a simple ex-

ample, I personally was brought up in rather small city apartment with a mother who was an obsessive *neatnik*. If I didn't clean up my desk before going to bed and forgot to put my homework away in my school bag I would wake to find that it had disappeared down the hallway incinerator. I remember vividly one teacher scoffing at that and telling me I needed a better excuse such as 'the dog ate it'. Of course I didn't have a dog, but the teacher relented his approbation after meeting my mother on open school night! Hence, I resolved when I went away to college that I would absolutely have the sloppiest room on campus. Now carry this over to my married life — what do I do but marry a nurse who is an obsessive-compulsive *neatnik*. (I guess it goes with her profession). No doubt I love her because she is a lot like my mother — including being a neatnik, though of course I didn't really realize that until after we were married for a while. Now this was a situation ripe for conflict and to be frank it does rear its head from time to time even after 52 plus years of marriage. But we both, more or less, reached an accommodation on this issue 51½ years ago (approximately) by Mary agreeing to stay away from my study area and me trying to remember to pick up all the stuff I seem to discard around the rest of the house (books, socks, newspapers, mail, notepaper, etc.).

Obviously, more serious issues can arise, and perhaps the worse is disagreements on how to handle the finances. Again accommodation and compromise are important. A couple that knows how to sit down and have effective communication about money matters can get through financial pitfalls — the alternative is often endless bickering that can end in the failure of the marriage. In the course of time, with patience and open discussion, the pair may find that one of the partners is far better at managing finances than the other — then it makes sense for that partner to be the primary planner and bill payer. In other marriages sharing responsibilities is the agreed mode, and the task of managing finances is a joint venture with various fiscal objectives divvied up according to interest and convenience (e.g. You take care of all the household bills, I'll take care of travel, taxes, savings, etc.). **Ultimately the most important decision that a couple has to make is to agree to live within their means (and this bears repeating again and again). Recall the injunction of the Apostle Paul:**

*“Keep your life free from love of money, **and be content with what you have**, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb 13:5 also Phil 4:11 and 1Tim 6:6, 8).*

Some final thoughts on learning to be *simpatico* need to be said about what to do when an issue becomes so emotionally important to us that we get very angry. This is not the ideal, but I would indeed be extremely surprised if there is a marriage anywhere that never had a disruptive issue. The apostle recognized that “anger” is part of the human condition when he told the Ephesians: “*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger*” (Eph 4:26).

However, our Brother Paul also pointed out that there is a difference between being “angry” and having it lead to “sin”. While we might get our emotions riled up, a *simpatico* person doesn't forget his or her love and commitment to the relationship. It is certainly not permissible to allow anger to lead to abusive behavior,

be it physical or verbal. Sticking to the issue at any volume level is far better than remaining silent, and considering the Apostle Paul's words about not letting the sun go down is very sage advice. The longer a divisive issue festers usually the worse the potential outcome. Sometimes the early intervention of a mediator may help resolve the issue. We will have more to say about conflict resolution and the role of the ecclesia in marriage counseling in later articles. But for the present it should be sufficient to say that third party intervention at an early date may be profitable if it is evident to a couple that an issue(s) has reached an impasse that can bring great harm to their relationship.

Next: "...a wise man listens to advice."

John C. Bilello, Ann Arbor, MI

Notes:

1. Fromm, E., *The Art of Loving*, Harper and Row, New York, 1956.
2. All references are from the ESV, except as noted.
3. There is no intent here to take a position that divorce should never happen under any circumstances. What is laid out here is the ideal.
4. USA Today, September 28, 2011.
5. The issues of addictions and physical violence will be treated in a later article.
6. No intent here to be gender stereotyped here, because in our household I do the cooking and would be more likely to prepare the "special" meal (which would involve any of her favorite Pasta dishes, for example!).
7. See Strong's number 02844.
8. 1Cor 13:5.
9. Rom 7:19.

Forgiveness (4)

The previous article in this series¹ established that we must forgive; for example:

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"
(Matt 6:12, 14-15).

This article looks at some common objections we may harbor about forgiveness. Whether or not forgiveness is in play in our lives propels us toward either life or death. Forgiveness practiced in our lives will even guide us to abundant life right now. Forgiveness unpracticed can even, right now, be a living death. "First principles" have been described as doctrines that concern matters of life and death — very important to get right — or else. Although not listed in the articles of the Statement of Faith, the concept and practice of forgiveness appears, from the Bible record, to be so close to the heart and intent of God for us that it really should be a top-of-the-list first principle.

In the spirit of living forgiveness, though, it is important to acknowledge that anybody can be easily confused about forgiveness. After all, forgiveness is God's idea. We aren't Him and we do get confused. For example, one common misconception is that forgiveness can be blocked by insurmountable obstacles.

Forgiveness versus reconciliation

A general description of forgiveness myths would include the following misconceptions:

- 1) there are some situations where forgiveness is really not mandated; and
- 2) something has to happen first before we can forgive.

Let's remember the definition of forgiveness. In an earlier article² we saw that the Biblical meaning of forgiveness is "taken up and carried away"; for example:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic 7:18-19).

Are you ready for the clinical definition of forgiving? Here goes:

"People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right)."

Phew, that was long. Here's a more concise version: "giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me." It is useful to revisit these definitions because forgiving someone does not require anything of anyone else or anything external to happen. It is all about you. You do not need cooperation from anyone to do this.

This is the first big point: *Reconciliation* does indeed take two to pull off. In contrast, *forgiveness* just takes you.

These concepts are easily confused. We often get reconciliation and forgiveness all mixed up. When we practice forgiveness, we may well end up unable to reconcile, but, if we mix them up we can end up blocking out the option of forgiving. How would you like it if your adversary said this to you: "I'm going to make you disobey God because I am not going to be sorry for what I did, apologize to you or give you any slack. In fact, I'll hurt you more, and so you will not be able to forgive me and you will be toast at the Judgment Seat"? This is a nearly perfect example of where reconciliation probably should never occur, but should that prevent you from forgiving them? Some people have been awfully, genuinely cruel to us. Forgiving them is essential whether or not reconciliation is an option. The truth is you are not commanded to complete a successful reconciliation. In fact, forgiving may not include reconciling with the person. (More on reconciliation later; it really is another subject.)

This article does not want to deprive you of the lovely effects that forgiveness will serve up to you in even the most toxic and destructive situations. Willfully abandoning resentment and all the venom it poisons us with is the best spiritual goal in such cases. Carrie Fisher said it powerfully: "Resentment is like drinking poison

and waiting for the other person to die”. Forgiving others is being nice to yourself.

Myths of forgiveness

Here are a few additional myths in this category:³

Myth: If they do not repent, I should not forgive.

Myth: Forgiving will not make the other person change their behavior; therefore it is a waste of time. I want them to change and apologize before I forgive them.

You can see, there is nothing in any definition that requires something of the offender. These are myths!

Is there anything else the offender can do to thwart you forgiving them? What if they are dead? Is it now impossible to forgive them? Of course not. Is it possible not even to know who the person is? Let’s say someone breaks into your home and steals an heirloom of your mother. This violation could fill the calmest person with rage. You don’t even know who they are! Yes, you can forgive them too.

So please, do not let externals keep you from this God-like trait of forgiving!

Forgiving does not imply forgetting

Another mythical area alluded to earlier is that to forgive is to pretend it never happened. Here are a few such myths from the full list you can get on the website:

Myth: Forgiveness means rebuilding the relationship.

Myth: Forgiving someone means allowing them to hurt you over and over.

Myth: Forgiveness requires release from consequences.

Myth: Forgiving is ignoring sin.

Myth: The result of forgiveness is we can now trust the offender.

There are more; this is just a sample from the list. Forgiving is actually learning. The clinical definition mentions “moral love.” Is not this the essence of *agape* love? It is a thought-driven love from which pleasant emotions can flow; it is not an emotion or erotic-driven response. Giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me does not mean I put myself in a spot to endlessly see the violation continue.

From its core meaning of “taking up and carrying away”, “forgiving” is engaging in a process of regarding the violation less and less over time, and at the same time regarding the offender apart from their offence. If the offender is in your face repeating the offence, you will not be regarding the violation less and less nor will you be able to regard the offender apart from their offence. Consent for repetition of the offence will not be helping you or the offender.

Here’s a verse to help:

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

At first glance one could think Paul was telling us to forgive and forget. Does it say to forget what happened? This verse is saying something more complete than that: move forward and leave the other things behind. This is the same exhortation we find in letter to the Hebrews:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1-2).

You need to leave some things behind in order to move forward. Leaving things behind does not imply being passive or victim-like. Rather, it is actively moving on to the high calling, factoring in enough of the past so you do not go that way again. Amnesia doesn't teach anything, but processing things that happen does. If you have not changed your focus from rage, resentment, and hurt to free yourself to go in another direction, then moving forward is hard, if not impossible. Suggestions on ways to learn from the past and move happily forward are scheduled for a later article in this series.

Forgiving does not imply approving bad behavior

In this same vein, sometimes we think that forgiving someone is being weak and wimpy, or letting them get away with it. Here are some myths in this area:

Myth: If I forgave, I'd be letting that person off the hook.

Myth: Offering forgiveness implies that what the other person did was OK.

Myth: Forgiveness is a sign of weakness.

These fallacies are easy to identify as myths until we are personally in a forgiveness situation. Then the myth turns real and we don't think that person deserves our forgiveness. In the pain of our own hurt it seems so unfair that not only did we suffer the violation, now it seems, we have to suffer through forgiving them. Why do I have to do all the work? To snap us out of such poor thinking, we only need to thank God that He does not treat us that way. Yes, this is your time to be good to yourself and learn about God's character. Yes, it isn't fair, but it is mercy, mercy to you! Yes, it pleases God when we turn to Him in our suffering. He is the Great Character Surgeon and Healer.

Forgiving is a process

Here are a few myths to finish with:

Myth: Forgiveness is merely an act or a decision.

Myth: Forgiveness is always easy.

Myth: Forgiveness can't be repeated.

Myth: I only need to forgive someone once. Any future negative feelings are to be ignored.

The answer to these misconceptions is: forgiveness is a process.

“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

Oh yes, someone steps on your toe and they say they are sorry and you hug and all is forgotten. But when speaking of offences that are bigger than that, it is going to be work, prayer, work, prayer to forgive them. You may have it all processed out of your life and then by chance you see them drive by in their car and wham, it all comes crashing back. A reaction is to beat yourself up and feel like a failure, but remember it’s a process and you are doing really well *“reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phil 3:13)*. So now the violation is in front of you again. This is the good news: you will find it easier to recuperate the ground lost because you have already done the work.

Conclusion

This topic is in reality a positive exhortation because the result of fighting through the myths of forgiveness is to emerge from life’s trials into freedom. These myths grip us and wrestle us to the ground. Life in Christ, in which we are encouraged to turn over the hurts and burdens to the one who bore all sins, is liberating. It is giving up some rights, especially the right to hurt someone who has hurt you. But it is also God pardoning our death penalty for sin to grant us His awesome Kingdom and a victorious life even now. Myths: No! Be good to yourself: Yes!

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Next article: Cognitive therapy.

Notes:

1. “Forgiveness (3),” *Tidings*, May, 2012.
2. “Forgiveness (2),” *Tidings*, March-April, 2012.
3. A more complete list of forgiveness myths is available on the *Tidings* website (www.tidings.org).

One But Not the Same: Bible Evidence for Gender Roles

(4) Some Common Objections to Biblical Gender Roles

This is the final part in a series of articles about the role of sisters in the ecclesia. This section will continue to consider and respond to some common arguments against Biblical roles for men and women. The objections indicated below are not direct quotes from any particular sources; what I’ve done is paraphrase some of the opposition that I’ve read and heard about in the past.

Objection: The word “brethren” in 1Cor 14 means “brothers and sisters”; therefore, verse 26, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation” tells us that both brothers and sisters were sharing doctrines, tongues, revelations, etc. at ecclesial meetings.

Response: In many places in the New Testament, the word “Brethren” can refer to both men and women; other times, it refers solely to men in the ecclesia, as in 1Cor 7:29 and 9:5. Which is it in 1Cor 14? The readers of this chapter are called “Brethren” or “you” by Paul, using second-person pronouns; however, the pronouns change to the third-person “they” in the section about women, verses 34 and 35. If the sisters were included in the term “Brethren”, why didn’t Paul write directly to them? If, on the other hand, Paul is primarily addressing men in the ecclesia throughout the chapter, the pronoun shift makes sense, as does the phrase “your women” in verse 34. The women are being written about, rather than addressed directly.

However, for the sake of argument, let’s suppose that sisters were indeed included in the word “Brethren” in 1Cor 14. Their inclusion would parallel the case of a brother with the gift of tongues. In verse 28, the tongue speaker is told that if there is no interpreter present, he must “keep silence” in spite of his gift. The same goes for the prophets — if a revelation came to another, the first prophet would have to stop (verse 30). It may sound strange that God would give a prophet a prophecy that he was not free to deliver at that time, but according to this chapter it certainly happened! The same would hold true for women in the ecclesia, who learn in verses 34-35 that they are not supposed to speak in ecclesial meetings at all. Instead, like the male prophets who had to remain silent, sisters can “*speak to [themselves], and to God*”(verse 28).

Objection: Since the Greek words “*aner*” and “*gyne*” can be translated husband/man or wife/woman depending on context, we can assume that when 1Tim 2:11-12 talks about women being in “subjection”, it is referring to wives being subject to their husbands, and not about all women in the ecclesia being forbidden to teach all men.

Response: This objection claims that because the Greek words for “man” and “woman” can sometimes mean “husband” and “wife”, the verses about men and women in the ecclesia are actually referring to the relationship between married couples. However, it’s difficult to spin these verses like that, because the primary meanings of “*aner*” and “*gyne*” are a simple reference to being male or female. You can’t just assign an alternate meaning to a word that easily, especially since many unmarried men are referred to in the New Testament using the word “*aner*”, including both Elijah and Jesus.

How do we know, then, when these words should be translated as husband and wife? The context tells us! When Paul is talking about submission in marriage and family relationships, he makes that clear: for example, he references the husband and wife being “one flesh” in Eph 5:31, and speaks of husbands and wives alongside children and parents in Col 3:18-20. In contrast, the context of 1Tim 2 shows that Paul is speaking about all men and women in the ecclesia, and not just husbands and wives. After all, husbands are not the only men who lift up their hands in prayer (1Tim 2:8), and wives are not the only women who dress modestly (1Tim 2:9). The context denies that Paul is writing solely about married relationships in this chapter.

In case we were still uncertain, we have strong Biblical evidence that God's hierarchy for men and women is applicable to the whole ecclesia. 1Cor 11:3 lays out this hierarchy by saying that *"the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"*. Could he be speaking only of husbands being the head over their wives? No, he's speaking about *"every man"* (verse 3), not just married ones; and the context says that *"even so is the man also by the woman"* (verse 12), which Young's literal translation reads as *"through the woman"* and the NASB reads as *"the man has his birth through the woman"*. This is, of course, only true if we're talking about mankind and womankind in general, since the wife does not give birth to her husband! Paul must be speaking of mankind and womankind, applying the hierarchy of men and women to the entire ecclesia.

Objection: The word "speak" in 1Cor 14:34 is *laleo*, which means to babble; women are not being forbidden to speak, but to chatter idly.

Response: To learn what sort of speaking Paul means by using *laleo*, all we have to do is ask the context — and we have plenty of other uses of that word in the chapter surrounding verse 34! Paul uses *laleo* for "speak" throughout 1Cor 14 for tongue-speaking and prophesying, saying things like *"he that prophesieth speaketh [laleo]"* (verse 3) and *"he that speaketh [laleo] in an unknown tongue"* (verse 4). He then finishes it up in verse 34 with *"it is not permitted unto them to speak [laleo]"*, referring to women in the meeting. The suggested, disparaging use of the word *laleo* does not occur at all in the New Testament.

Objection: It is so important to us as Christadelphians to preach, and in this day and age, when women and men are seen as absolute equals, holding women back in the ecclesia can be a hindrance to the Gospel.

Response: We all know the truth of Matt 7:13-14:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Even so, to see someone lose interest in the Truth, or fall away, because of one of our Christadelphian practices is always a source of grief. I have personally known unbaptized contacts, and baptized brothers and sisters, who left the ecclesia because of our belief that we should not marry outside of the Truth, fellowship with other Christian groups, serve in the military, and pay full-time ministers. People I know have rejected the Truth because we do not believe in universal salvation, or that children should give public prayers during memorial service, or that a Baptist should not join the ecclesia without first being re-baptized. Those who leave the faith have all sorts of reasons that have to do with some of our practices being unpalatable to them. However, the question weighing heavily on us should not be how we can make our beliefs more palatable, but how we can closer reflect the Truth. Then we need to learn how to teach the Truth more effectively, so that our hearers understand that our roles for men and women aren't just our personal

preferences, or a take-it-or-leave-it part of Christadelphian culture, but a product of the Bible itself. If we evaluated our teachings based upon which ones were most likely to increase the ecclesia, couldn't it similarly be argued that abolishing gender distinctions in the ecclesia could result in a falling away? No matter what the world thinks, we must obey God. Paul's closing thoughts in 1Cor 14:36-38 seem appropriate to this question:

"What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

Objection: There are only two New Testament passages that seem to suggest that women should not teach or speak in ecclesial meetings, while there is the equivalent of a couple of chapters' worth of examples suggesting that women did indeed speak and teach. Shouldn't we listen to the side with the greatest evidence?

Exactly how many times does a commandment need to appear in the New Testament for it to be valid? A single occurrence of a truth doesn't lessen its importance. If 1Tim 2 and 1Cor 14 were the only places where the role of women in the ecclesia was spelled out for us, we would still be required to obey them as *"the commandments of the Lord"* (1Cor 14:37). However, as we saw in the preceding articles, there is a wealth of Bible evidence that God intends different roles for male and female believers, and the Old and New Testaments are consistent on this subject. So where are the supposed "couple of chapters' worth of examples" that would seem to contradict the clear meaning of Paul's words about sisters? Here are some of the examples that have been said to "prove" that women and men should have no distinction in roles:

Priscilla: In Acts 18:24-26, there is little doubt that Apollos learned from Priscilla. Luke tells us that Apollos was **already** *"mighty in the scriptures"*, *"instructed in the way of the Lord"*, and *"taught diligently the things of the Lord"*; however, he had a gap in his knowledge regarding baptism. Both Aquila and his wife Priscilla *"took him unto them"* and explained this matter to him *"more perfectly"*. Priscilla did not act alone, and this was not a public act of teaching or leading the church. Nowhere does it say that Priscilla did most of the explaining. Some have suggested that because Priscilla's name is sometimes listed first when the couple is mentioned, this means that she was the more talkative or active of the couple; however, this is speculation at best, since her name is listed first in only three of the six places where the couple is mentioned. Aquila is also named first in their encounter with Apollos, so this makes it difficult to assign a definite meaning to the order of their names. This example illustrates that there is nothing morally wrong about a man learning something from a woman, but it is not an example of a woman as a teacher and leader of the first century ecclesia.

Phoebe: In Rom 16:1, Phoebe is described as a *"servant of the church which is at Cenchrea"*. The Greek word for "servant" is *diakonos*, the same word used for "deacon" three times in Paul's writing describing the ecclesial position of a dea-

con; the other 28 times this word is used in the New Testament, it is translated “servant” or “minister”. Clearly, both men and women may function as servants of the ecclesia! Even if Paul was referring to Phoebe as a “deacon”, there is nothing in the role of a deacon that implies eldership, leadership, or even teaching. This example doesn’t prove anything other than how vital the service of sisters is to the household of God.

Junias: Paul says in Rom 16:7 that Andronicus and Junias were “*of note among the apostles*”. Opinion is divided among Greek scholars as to whether “Junias” is a male or female name, but feminists have seized upon the possibility that Paul may be referring to a female apostle. However, it is not at all unmistakable that Junias was necessarily a woman; and even if so, Junias was not even necessarily an apostle! The Greek word for “among” is a preposition translated “by” 163 times in the New Testament and “among” 117 times; Paul may have been saying that Junias was of note *by* the apostles, not *among* them. Even if Junias was indeed a woman, this could simply mean that Andronicus was an apostle and Junias was his wife, as Paul says, “*Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*” (1Cor 9:5). This highly speculative example of a person who only *might* have been a woman and only *might* have been an apostle doesn’t do much to conclusively prove a feminist interpretation.

Jezebel: Surprisingly enough, Jezebel of Rev 2:20-23 is actually cited as New Testament proof that women were teachers in the first century ecclesia. Firstly, just because a person had the gift of prophecy does not automatically mean that person was a teacher. But more compellingly, Jezebel’s ecclesia is not a positive example of the way things should be done in the household of God, as they tolerated her promoting fornication! This example shows us nothing about the way Christ intended his body to operate.

Similarly, those who want to erase gender distinctions in the ecclesia often champion Miriam, Deborah and Huldah as examples of women who had leadership roles over men in the Old Testament. It is suggested that there is a great number of examples like this, but this is simply not true, as to list these three women is to nearly mention them all: just three, over the entire Old Testament period! Deborah spoke a personal prophecy to Barak encouraging him to lead, Huldah delivered God’s message for the king from her own home, and Miriam led the women in her prophetic song; these are not the clear, unmistakable portraits of female authority that the feminist viewpoint makes them out to be. As we saw above, the case for women as leaders and teachers over men in the New Testament is just as weak; a mere handful of examples outfitted with much speculation, amid an entire New Testament picture of men as the heads in their families and ecclesias. The evidence of role distinctions between men and women stands firm.

Objection: 1) 1Tim 2:11-12 is addressing a Gnostic heresy which stated that women are superior to men. The verses do not really say that women should not teach or exercise authority over men, but that they should not teach false doctrine. 2) The statement about women being silent in 1Cor 14:34-35 applies not to all women, but to women who are immature in the Truth; it’s address-

ing a specific group of disorderly women and telling them not speak if they're going to disrupt ecclesial activity.

Response: There were undoubtedly particular issues of false doctrine and disorder that plagued the first century ecclesia at the time of Paul's writing. However, Paul does not present his teaching about women's roles as being conditional on the circumstances in which they were written. In fact, he does the opposite — when saying that women should not teach men in the ecclesia in 1Tim 2:11-12, he links his teaching all the way back to Adam and Eve and the situation in the Garden of Eden. Lest we think that his words only applied because of the times he was writing in, he connects gender roles with creation and makes them binding on all mankind and womankind who would follow after Christ!

The clearest answer to the above objections is simply that *this is not what the verses say*. These Scriptures make clear, general statements about men and women in the ecclesia, with none of the qualifications that the objectors would like to see stated outright. Arguments against differing roles for men and women usually try to find alternate explanations to show that these verses somehow don't mean what they say. Thus, the Word of God which simply says: "*It is a shame for women to speak in the church*", becomes the words of man, saying: "It was a shame for a particular group of women who were new to the Truth and being rowdy during meeting; they have the right to speak and teach in the church, but not if they're going to be loud and rude". The Word of God, which simply says: "*I suffer not a women to teach*", becomes: "I suffer not a few specific women to teach: those who preach the heresy of Gnosticism and woman's supremacy over man. Women are free to teach, as long as they don't teach false doctrine about those particular subjects."

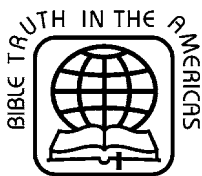
When God's words have to be so supplemented with man's words in order to be understood, it begs the question of whether we really trust the Bible. Are we allowing ourselves to take the clear teaching of the Bible at face value, or do our preconceived ideas and desires force us to find some other way to read these verses? It seems that because the plain meaning of these verses is not supportive of the world's standard of gender equality, therefore they must mean something else. These objections also ignore the overarching theme of male teaching and leadership throughout the Bible, evidence so great that it cannot simply be explained away. We would be wise to question interpretations that do not allow us to take the practical examples, or the instructive teachings of Scripture at face value without adding our own interpretation.

Are we truly committed to following the example of the New Testament ecclesia? The answer will lie in whether we are willing to seek and follow what Scripture says about how we ought to conduct ourselves in the house of God.

(Concluded)

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)

"Experience is the hardest teacher. She gives the test first and the lesson later"
(Dan Quisenberry).



Bible Mission News

Jamaican Warmth

This article was written by Bro. Charlie Link, Jr. (Moorestown, NJ) who shares his experience in a short trip accompanying the Luffs to Jamaica.



Bro. Arthurs with Bro. and Sis. Luff

Leaving Philadelphia it was nine below freezing and arriving in Jamaica at 9:25 am, February 21st, it was a tropical 80ish. Met Bro. Ray Arthurs (Broughton Ecclesia), along with Bro. Don Luff and his Sister-wife Miriam (Brantford, ON Ecclesia, CBMC Representatives). Bro. Ray, dodging numerous pot holes, drove us to his tourist villa and home in Negril with beach and turquoise ocean. We, including the vacationing Sis. Claudette White (S. Ozone Park, NYC Ecclesia), shared in the daily Bible readings.

Years ago, Bro. Ray ventured alone to England at age 16, heard a Christadelphian lecture and a few years later was baptized. Bro. Ray gives every Bible class and exhortation at his ecclesia. He was provided with a website and other printed materials. Bro. Mathew Williams (Harvey River Ecclesia) is the sole speaker at his ecclesia. There are more sisters in Jamaica than brothers, and the few speaking brethren are appreciative of any effort to relieve the load. Additionally, many roads are in need of major repair. Bro. Patrick Johnson (May Pen Ecclesia), provided transportation to a number of locations. Regarding the pot holes he half-joked, "You need a PhD to drive here".

At the February 22, 2012, Fraternal Gathering at the Broughton Ecclesia, Bro. Don Luff delivered the exhortation. Bre. Don and Keith Kinlocke (Spanish Town Ecclesia, CBMJ Chairman) also gave talks that led to lively group discussions. Without Christadelphian parents, a Sunday School scholar named Anita traveled from the Port Maria Ecclesia, along with others on a mini-bus, to attend the 10:30 am gathering over four hours away — such was her hunger to hear God's Word. Sis. Kay Brown (Broughton Ecclesia) was one of the sisters preparing lunch despite a serious medical condition and we pray she may have a full recovery. One observation of our Jamaican brethren was the joyful, exuberant, outstanding singing both at the Fraternal Gathering and at the individual ecclesias — all without organ or piano.

Bro. and Sis. Luff, despite strict air travel baggage restrictions, managed to squeeze in 22 pairs of kids shoes, school supplies, eye glasses, kids clothing, back packs, Sunday school supplies, hymn books, large print Bibles and *Wrested Scriptures* for our Jamaican brethren.



Fraternal Gathering at Broughton

At Round Hill there was hospitality from a number of members like Sisters Sonia Blair, Sasheeka Elliott and Delores Chambers. The speaking Bre. Leecroft Blair, Marlon Jackson, and others provided many helpful comments as they introduced me to the Jamaican style of interactive participatory Bible classes. These two brethren, relatively young in the Truth, prepare every Bible class, exhortation and mutual improvement class for an ecclesia of about 20. Sis. Ronique Elliott and others



Bible class at Round Hill

provided Godly conversation, friendship, information and humor on the bus ride from the Fraternal. A 17 year-old Sis. Sasheeka showed selflessness, a spiritual maturity well beyond her years, and she led a pastoral care visit to Sis Sislyn Wilkie who is cared for by her daughter Sis. Izone Elliott. As requested, the first Bible class was on Genesis 37-42 with handouts dispensed. Notes on Esther were provided due to time constraints and a shorter alternative Bible class was given with website information

to assist future classes. Handshakes, hugs, kisses and high fives were received from everyone upon departure.



Visiting at the Gordon's

Bro. Melvin and his Sister-wife Gerzel Gordon (May Pen Ecclesia) invited Bro. and Sis. Luff and Bro. Link into their home and looked after us in every way. Sis. Gerzel was an educator who also taught the Truth and was helpful in the founding of the May Pen Ecclesia. With God's help she accomplished this without going beyond the Biblical parameters of what a sister's conduct should be. During our stay she led pas-

toral care visits and we even sampled the famous Jamaican "juicy beef". Sis. Annette Johnson (May Pen Ecclesia, CBMJ Secretary) coordinated the itineraries. The Bible class on Acts 27-28 involved interactive participation. Materials photocopied for Round Hill were also dispensed to May Pen members. With time to interact, I felt bonded to this family as if we had been close friends for many years. There were unexpected parting gifts from the "May Penites".

An exhortation was delivered at Broughton on "Nehemiah as a type of Christ" and afterward the speaker was hugged by every single member. It wasn't an atypical greeting, this is how they treat any speaker. No need to wonder if there is a lot of love in Jamaica. The climate is warm and so is the brotherhood.

Sis. Gerzel expressed the need for at least one and preferably two full time missionaries (ideally husband and wife teams) to help bolster the ecclesias. Similarly, Bro. Ray expressed the need for more capable brethren to instill spiritual growth and with the interest, stronger discipleship. It is clear our brethren in Jamaica want, need and deserve support.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Five Baptisms in Guadalajara

It is with great joy that we announce five baptisms in Guadalajara on March 18, 2012. Each candidate gave a very clear confession of the hope we share and of their commitment to a new life in Christ.

Esperanza Ortega Ibarra came to us from a Christian church, looking for more diligent Bible Study. She always had problems with the popular doctrines of Satan and the Trinity. Her studies with us put all the puzzle pieces in place for her and she is quite overjoyed to now be a member. She has already been an active participant in the ecclesia and will be of great help in Guadalajara where there are only a few

sisters. Sis. Esperanza has four sons: Jonathan, Josue, Daniel and Cristian. Three of her sons and her mother, Luz, attended the baptism. The two younger sons and Luz are attending classes with her.

Oscar Villezca Rivera has been studying in the Bible Center for more than 16 months. He first came and quietly read our literature while seated in the foyer out front. He would come several times a week and read for hours, one pamphlet after another. Finally he was willing to come inside and do the Bible readings with us, and later attended classes. When he finally began to talk with us some eight months later, it was clear that he understood clearly what he was reading and was convinced that we were teaching Biblically. A couple of months ago he began to talk about baptism. We did formal studies with him to make sure that he was not lacking in any aspect, and to make sure he understood the commitment and change he was undertaking. He has already become quite helpful in the distribution of flyers for the Bible Center.

Efren Becerra Bue has been studying with us for a year. He has three grown children. He has found great joy in coming to know the Scriptures and knows he has much still to learn and grow.

Jose Antonio Espita was attending our ecclesia in Guadalajara when he was 15-16 years old. He had since relocated to Tijuana, where he has resided for the past five years. Currently he is visiting his family in Guanajuato from whom he had been estranged for the past 16 years and just recently reunited. He will be an associate member of our ecclesia.

Yolanda del Carmen Estrada Orosco lives in Tijuana with her two daughters, Madison and Allison. She too will be an associate member of our ecclesia.

The Bible Center in Guadalajara remains open Monday through Saturday from 10 am until 6 pm. We have three mid-week Bible studies: Wed 11 am, Thurs 7:30 pm, and Saturday 4:30 pm. Sunday we have the Memorial Service at 11 am and a Bible study at 12:30 pm. We do the Bible readings publically on Monday through Saturday at 3 pm, with several from the neighborhood attending regularly. This schedule allows for both formal and private classes which conform to the schedule of individuals. We have been averaging between 25-40 non-baptized people in study classes each month. We have several who are eagerly pursuing classes for

baptism and, Lord Willing, we will be welcoming them into fellowship soon.

We continue to thank the Lord for his great blessings on our work in Guadalajara. Please remember us in your prayers.

Sis. Cynthia Paiva





Lots of hugs for the new brothers and sisters.



Another new Sister in Guadalajara!

It is with great joy we announce the baptism of *Andrea Barbara Leon Mitchell* on April 22, 2012. More than 40 were gathered in the home of Sis. Cynthia Paiva to celebrate her resurrection to a new life. Andrea has been studying in the Bible Center in Guadalajara since December 2010. The past six months she has been the roommate of Sis. Sarah Cheetham from New Jersey. Andrea is in her early 20's and came without any Bible knowledge. She was a keen student from the beginning. She works and attends classes at the university, yet makes time to come to the readings and personal classes several times a week. She has been transforming her life during the past year and a half of study and often preaches to her friends through action and word. Her parents, her boyfriend, and her boyfriend's parents were all in attendance at the baptism, and commented on their support for her in her new walk. Her boyfriend and his best friend are also studying with us. Sis. Andrea has a very joyous personality and a serving spirit, and will surely be a very positive member of the ecclesia in Guadalajara. Angels rejoice with us!

We feel greatly blessed in Guadalajara with the recent baptisms. Last summer, there were so few sisters in the meeting and almost all of the new students were men.



However, we are very pleased to say that this is the second sister to be baptized in the past couple of months and there appear to be others who may nearing such a commitment.

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

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

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

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We rejoice in being able to report the birth of Miriam Booker, daughter of Bro. Adam and Sis. Wallesha Booker, and first grandchild of Bro. George and Sis. Barbara Booker.

We also rejoice with Bro. Ethan Bearden and Sis. Nicole Nevers, and their parents — Bro. Fred and Sis. Laura Bearden and Bro. Scott and Sis. Cindy Nevers (Wachusett, MA) — in their marriage, December 23, 2012, in Massachusetts. A reception was held in our hall in January.

We are also pleased to report that Bro. Kevin Aardal is back in fellowship and commended to the Los Angeles, CA Ecclesia.

We are saddened to report the falling asleep of Bro. George Brown in October. Our prayers are with Sis. Susan Brown in her loss, as well as ours.

In November we had our annual fall fraternal gathering at the HEB camp. Bro. Nathan Badger delivered classes on, “Jacob”. We thank him for his classes and were pleased that his mom Sis. Cathy Badger was able to join him.

In February, we also had a Sisters’ Study Day on the topic, “Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World”, and thank all those who helped and attended.

We welcomed the following brothers and sisters from other states or countries: Michael and Vanessa Floyd, James Floyd, and Bonnie Floyd (Port Elizabeth, S. Africa); Marion Clayton (Brantford, ON); Claude and Debbie Mindorff (Calgary, AB), Blanche Wallace (Freehill, Jamaica); Rose Madge (Milford Road, MI); Scott and Cindy Nevers, Judith Nevers (Wachusett, MA); Kait Nevers (Cranston, RI); and Alton Stuchlik (Ann Arbor, MI). We wish to thank Bre. Claude Mindorff, Alton Stuchlik, Paul Wade, and Mark Wade for their words of exhortation.

Fred Bearden

AVON, IN

Our ecclesia has been blessed once again. On March 17, 2012, SASHA PLEW, daughter of Bro. Sam and Sis. Cassandra Plew, was baptized into the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are very grateful to our heavenly Father to see so many of our young people ask for baptism.

We also rejoice with our Bro. Paul and Sis. Erin Sparacino in the birth of their firstborn daughter, Gabriella Elisabeth Sparacino on February 2, 2012. Gabriella is doing well and growing fast!

We have enjoyed visits from many other Christadelphians over the past months. We also appreciate that Bro. Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX) and Bro. Bill Folkerts provided us with words of exhortation.

Lee Livermore

BRANTFORD , ON

In April we enjoyed a very helpful and uplifting series of studies at our annual family study weekend given by our Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, UK) on the theme, "Judgment, Mercy and Faith," taken from Deuteronomy. We are very appreciative of our brother's time and effort. MP3 recordings of the classes are available from www.brantfordchristadelphians.com.

God willing the Brantford Prophecy Day will be held on September 22, 2012, with our Bro Matt Norton (Lismore, Aust.) speaking on the theme, "Revelation Examined and Explained."

Daniel Billington

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We are saddened by the falling asleep in the Lord of our Bro. Norman Brimer, this past February, in his ninety-eighth year. Bro. Norman was baptized at the Greenaway Ecclesia at age eighteen and had served this ecclesia as Recording Brother, Sunday School Superintendant, Arranging Brother, Exhorter and Presider. He longed for the return of his Lord with a passion and was so thankful that he had been called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel. He died in the hope of the resurrection from the dead made possible by his saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be missed by his children and their families and all of his brothers and sisters at Greenaway.

The Greenaway Fraternal Picnic will be held at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Georgetown, ON, on Saturday, September 8, 2012, at 2:00pm. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the topic, "Who is My Neighbour? — Lessons from the Parable of the Good Samaritan". A picnic supper will be held at 5:00pm.

Tom Thorp

HONESDALE, NY

We took our congregation's annual Easter picture in front of our chapel. Everyone was smartly dressed.



On April 29, 2012, we hosted a luncheon with theme, “Chicken and Biscuits”. The sisters, chefs all, presented a wonderful lunch. We had the following visitors; Kirsten Frisbie, Jeremy Jeffery, and Pat Seipp.

Stephen J. DeMarco

SAANICH PENINSULA, BC

Sis. Terri-Ann Malczewski has transferred her membership to the Fort St. James Ecclesia, and we commend her to the love and care of the brothers and sisters in Fort St. James and northern BC. Bro. Tim and Sis. Rebecca French, along with their children Caleb and Ethan, have moved back to the Shaftesbury Rd Ecclesia in Sydney, Aust. and will also be missed. Bro. Malcolm and Sis. Josie Shrimpton have transferred their membership from the Victoria Ecclesia and we are delighted to have them with us.

We’d like to thank Bro. David Lawrence (Prince George, BC) for his thoughts and efforts at our February study day weekend. We likewise express our gratitude for the efforts over the last year of Bre. Geoff Higgs, Peter Lawrence, Matthew Bennett, Matt Neville, John Pillion and Mark Snobelen (Victoria, BC), and Bre. Caleb Lawrence and Simon Snobelen (Vancouver, BC).

Additionally we have been blessed with some new babies including: Zoe Dangerfield born to Bro. Mark and Sis. Kayla; Elias Kenzie, born to Bro. Austen and Sis. Crystal; and Zion Hunter, born to Bro. Marc and Sis. Melissa.

Marc Hunter

SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE, NH

It was with great joy we note that MICAH QUINDAZZI, son of our Sis. Zoe Ilaqua and brother of Bro. Philip Quindazzi, was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ on May 5, 2012. Our new brother was immersed by his grandfather, Bro. Terry Fearn (Vancouver, BC). Bro. Terry brought us the exhortation on Sunday. Our thanks to the Worcester, MA Ecclesia for the use of their hall and their hospitality in hosting the baptism.

Frank Conahan

SUSSEX, NB

With great joy we announce the baptism of ALYSSA MARIE BAINES, oldest daughter of Bro. Paul and Sis. Marie Baines, on April 22, 2012. This happy occasion was witnessed by visitors from Bedford, NS, and Ontario, along with members of the Sussex, BC Ecclesia, as it was our Spring study weekend.

We thank Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) for his studies on “Hosea”, and Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) for his studies on “Enoch and Jacob” as well as his exhortation, given as part of the WCF directors conference which was held recently in Sussex.

We also welcomed the following visiting brothers and sisters: Sherry Young, Tom and Vivian Thorp (Greenaway, ON); Steve Davis (Boston, MA); Alan Ghent (Toronto, ON); Steve and Julie, and Jerushah Snobelen, and Ken and Wendy Dickson (Bedford, NS); and Brandon Ridgeway (NL) during April.

In July and August our Memorial service will be at 10 am.

Cliff Baines

TORONTO CHURCH STREET, ON

We are saddened to report that Bro. James Struthers fell asleep in the Lord on April 10, 2011, in his 93rd year. Our sympathies are extended to his children and grandchildren. Also we are saddened to report that Sis. Isobel Stuppard also fell asleep in the Lord on May 19, 2011, in her 88th year. Our sympathies are extended to her extended family. Both our brother and sister were long time members of our ecclesia and demonstrated a good example to us of dedication to the things concerning the kingdom of God, being active participants in the ecclesia until age and illness forced them into retirement homes. Bro. Jim was baptized on March 29, 1939, and Sis. Isobel was baptized on April 4, 1954. We look forward to the great day when we will be able to rejoice together with them once again in the kingdom of God.

We are pleased to report the following baptisms into the saving Name of Jesus Christ: on August 14, 2011, ALOYSIUS GROOTHUIS (Louie), father of Bro. Luke Groothuis; and on March 25, 2012, LUCIANO RAMOS. Both Bro. Louie and Bro. Luciano were students at our Learn to read the Bible effectively seminars. We are pleased to report the marriage of Bro. Michael Narjes to Sis. Madison McNutt (Paris Ave, OH) on May 7, 2010. We pray that the Lord will continue to be a guide to them as they travel together toward the kingdom of God.

The following brothers and sisters have chosen to transfer to other ecclesias and we wish them well in their new ecclesial homes: Nima and Feng Panahi to the Toronto-East Ecclesia on September 14, 2011; Michael Narjes to the Paris Ave, OH Ecclesia on October 14, 2011; Kelly Campbell to the Toronto West Ecclesia on January 2, 2011; Michael Payne to the Esslingen, Germany Ecclesia on October 15, 2010; Diane Hills to the Victoria, BC Ecclesia on September 6, 2010; and Cheryl Thackoorie to the Hamilton McNab Ecclesia on September 1, 2010. We welcome by transfer from the Kingston, Jamaica Ecclesia on March 20, 2011, Sis. Rosie Wright, who has decided to spend the summers in the Toronto area and the winters in Jamaica.

The exhibit and lectures related to the 400 year anniversary of the King James Bible that was presented in September 2011 by the Toronto area ecclesias, was well supported during the weekend by brothers and sisters who were able to assist over one hundred visitors through the exhibit proclaiming the word of God. Special thanks are offered to all who assisted with this inter-ecclesial activity and especially to the Billington family (Brantford, ON Ecclesia) without whose support and assistance, this proclamation would not have been possible.

We wish to thank all the brothers who have assisted our ecclesia with exhortations, lectures and Bible classes over the past several months. We also wish to thank the brothers and sisters who have assisted at our Memorial service with playing the organ. The ecclesia is most appreciative of their labour in the Lord for us. The undersigned has assumed the position of Recording Brother for the ecclesia. Please direct all correspondence to Bro. William Perks at either the ecclesial mailing address or electronically to bill_perks@rogers.com.

William Perks

VICTORIA, BC

We are pleased to welcome two new members by transfer. Sis. Leanne Fidan comes to us from Brampton, ON; and Bro. Jeremy Foster comes to us from Hamilton McNab, ON. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Book Road, ON) lead our well attended Spring Study Day on the theme, "Lessons from the Sower". Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton

Book Road, ON) presented a lecture entitled, “The Extraordinary Power of the Word of God” following the CYC Conference.

Bro. Stephen Snobelen (Halifax, NS) presented a special lecture on “The KJB: Reflections on an Anniversary.” We had the opportunity to display our recently acquired facsimile copy and 400 Year Anniversary copy of the KJV. This volume came with an original leaf displaying Isaiah chapters eighteen to twenty. These will be added to our growing Bible collection.

Visitors continue to be a blessing. We have welcomed many since our last posting including members from Comox Valley, Nanaimo, New Westminster, Saanich Peninsula, Kamloops, Maple Ridge, Vancouver, and Vernon in BC; London, and Hamilton Book Road ON; and Coventry, UK.

Our Fraternal Gathering will be held again this year on the Labor Day weekend, September 1, 2012. We will be pleased to have Bro. Ron Hicks leading the discussions. His topic will be, “The Scribes and Pharisees: Were Their Problems Our Problems?”

Our Fall Study Weekend will be held on November 10-11, 2012. We have three speakers presenting on the theme, “Defining the Household Today.” They are Bre. Wesley Butler and Simon Snobelen (Vancouver, BC) and Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC).

For further information please contact the undersigned at: csnobelen@csll.ca.

Clyde Snobelen

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the Table of our absent Lord the following brothers and sisters: Linda Jones, Rachel Newton (Los Angeles, Ca); David and Erin Clubb (Simi Hills, Ca); Ed Newton (Verdugo Hills, Ca); Jeanna Wolfe (Dallas, TX); Tyler Cherry (West Houston, TX); Pearce and Holly Prater (North Houston, TX). We thank Bre. David Clubb, Ed Newton and Pearce Prater for their words of comfort and exhortation.

Over the weekend of April 6-8, 2012, we held our annual Spring Gathering at the T4C Camp in Freestone, TX. Our class leader was Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON). Our brother's theme for the weekend was, “The Sun of Righteousness Will Arise.” We were pleased that Sis. Charlene, Bro. Shaphan, Shoshanna and Josiah were able to make the trip. We thank our brother for his efforts to stir up our minds in anticipation of Christ's return. Certainly there are better things in store for God's creation and may the necessary changes take place under the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ!

John A. Clubb

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS ON FACEBOOK

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

To a servant standing by his bed as he lay dying, Sir Walter Scott requested, “Bring me the Book.” “Sir,” replied the servant, “Which one? There are thousands of books in the library.” Scott answered, “There is only one, the Book. Bring me the Bible.”

Minute Meditation

When the Answer to Prayer is “No”

James tells us that “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

There is no one who was more righteous than our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is no one who prayed to his Heavenly Father more fervently than did the Lord Jesus Christ that night when he was in the garden waiting to be arrested, tortured and crucified. Luke tells us that “being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”.

Yet we know that the answer to his prayer to his Heavenly Father was “no”. We read in Matthew that he pleaded, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Before he had even finished speaking, realizing what his Father’s response would be, he added, “nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt”. He knew that all things are possible to God and that God would hear his plea, but he knew what God wanted and was willing to surrender himself and accept his Father’s will. How thankful we are that he overcame!

God hears prayers, and God answers prayers, but, as with those prayers of Jesus, when we pray, His answer is not necessarily the answer we want. He sometimes says “no” to our prayers. Do we sometimes say “no” to our own prayers? In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus tells us to pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”. In a hymn we sing, “Help us this and every day to live more nearly as we pray”. We pray to God, asking Him to deliver us from temptation, and then we go out and say to the temptation, “Go away closer”. We do not flee from temptation as we should. We approach as close as possible, sometimes examine what we desire from various aspects, and, before we know it, we have fallen into the very temptation we have asked God to deliver us from.

We do not fool Him when we do this. Are we fooling ourselves? How thankful we are for forgiveness! Our God is a loving merciful God who is compassionate towards those that love Him and seek to serve Him. Peter was forgiven for his three denials of his Lord, Paul was forgiven for persecuting Christians, and David was forgiven for adultery and murder. God is also willing to forgive us, and we need to fervently pray for forgiveness every day.

We can take comfort in the assurance that “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” When we are being tempted, the Lord knows that we can resist it because He will not give us a temptation beyond our ability to resist. We sin when we do not draw upon that strength to resist.

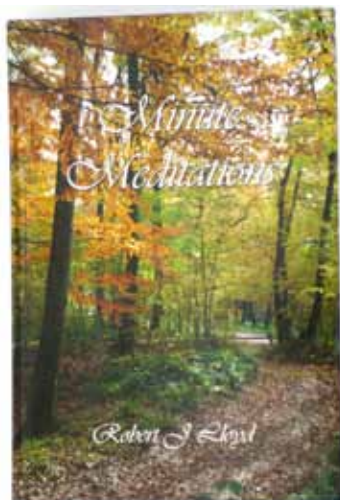
James tells us “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”. We can understand when we ask amiss, but many times we do

pray fervently for what we believe is a good cause, and those prayers, just like the Lord's, are also sometimes answered with a "no".

We have all prayed that someone seriously ill would recover, and then the person dies. It was God's will, and He does know best, but sometimes we are so full of sorrow that we have a hard time accepting that. We know that we need always to accept His answer as the best even when we do not understand it. We read in the Psalms that "he giveth his beloved sleep". Often when our prayers are not answered as we wanted them to be, we can, over time, look back and see the wisdom of the Father that it really was for the best. Some things will not be made clear to us until we are in the Kingdom with His dear son.

We are thankful that our Heavenly Father really does care for us and that He has promised that all things will work together for our good. The goodness that God has planned surely is our ultimate goal, so we continue to pray fervently for what we believe would be best and then, with our Lord, we say, "not my will but thine be done".

Robert J. Lloyd



Coming Soon! **Minute Meditations** **10th edition**

The new tenth edition of Minute Meditations has 30 meditations that are not found in the previous edition.

The new book will be available in the US from the normal distributors for \$11.00 plus shipping.

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JUNE 2012

2-3 NY Fraternal Gathering at the South Ozone Park, NY Hall. Bro. John Pople has agreed to speak on "Solomon and Delilah". Contact: Bro. Ben Drepaal yerubbaal@yahoo.com or (718) 847-9638.

8-10 New York Sisters' Retreat at The Inn, Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Teacher: Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO): "Problems and Prayers". Registration deadline was April 15. Entire weekend cost: Single \$376, Double \$288, Triple \$258 per person. Make check payable to "New York Christadelphian". Mail to Sis. Averil Ferguson, 814A Tilden St., Apt. 5B, Bronx, NY, 10467. Contact Sis. Averil Ferguson (718) 881-8705 or e-mail averilpsm23@juno.com.

23 London, ON Study day. Our speaker is Bro. Peter Forbes (Glenfield, UK). The subject will be, "Making the Psalms Live", and classes will commence at 11 am. Lunch will be provided.

24-30 California Christadelphian Kids Camp. Children 9-16. Teachers are Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia) and Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Our theme is "Elisha". Cost is \$125 before February 29, and \$150 afterwards. Register at www.kidscampcalifornia.com. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com.

30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. Theme "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23). Youth theme "I will Praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "The Lord Raised Up Judges" (adults) and "Paul's Powerful Preaching" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord" (adults) and "What Would You Do?" (teens); Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia): "Epistle to James — Be Ye Doers of the Word" (adults) and "How Judge Ye? — Case Studies Based on the Law of Moses" (teens). Information on website www.christadelphians.net/macbs.

JULY 2012

1-7 California Youth Conference at Ojai, CA. An exciting week of study and fellowship for ages 17 (or baptized) and up. The theme is Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians. The speaker will be Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia). Contact www.youthconferencecalifornia.com or Bro. Jason Hensley jason@speakingofhisglory.com.

4-9 Calaveras Family Bible Camp Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Classes will be given by Bro. David Haltom (Pomona, CA) on the topic "The Reality of Discipleship". Contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcDonald@mcdonald-printing.com.

8-14 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. The teachers are Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA): "Scriptural Discipline" adults, and "The Fundamentals of Bible Prophecy" teens; Bro. Stephen Mansfield (Golden Grove, Australia): "1 Corinthians" adults, and "Ephesians" teens; Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia): "The Power of Prayer" adults, and "How Judge Ye?" teens. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland shannonjejh@att.net. Registration forms are on our website: www.swcbs.com.

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

14-22 Eastern Bible School Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Thy Kingdom Come". Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia): "Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ" (adults), and "Cameos of the Kingdom" (teens); Bro. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills CA): "A Journey With Purpose" (adults), and "The Road Ahead" (teens); Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON): "Micah: To Do Justly, to Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly Before Your God" (adults), and "Is He Not the God of Gentiles Also?" (teens). Contact Sis.

Cindy Nevers at P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501 or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website at www.tecbs.org.

21-29 Midwest Bible School will be held at Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Mark Vincent (UK): "Things Done Twice — God's Hand in the Life of Joseph"; Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "The Life of Timothy"; Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia): "The King's Manifesto for Life". For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Dr., Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, e-mail: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

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

28-Aug 4 Christadelphian Bible Camp Manitoulin Island, ON The theme is "Be Ye Transformed By the Renewing of Your Mind" The speakers will be Bro. Con Mitsos (Woodville, Australia) on the subject "Josiah the Great Reformer" and Bro. Roger Long (Grosvenor Road, UK) on the subject "From Upper Room to Resurrection". More details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or 416-284-0290.

29-Aug 4 Rogue River Bible School at Union Creek, OR. Speakers are Bro. Stephen Mansfield: "Peter, The Fragile Stone That Became An Immovable Rock"; Bro. David Jennings: "Scriptural Discipline"; Bro. Jim Cowie: "The Prophecy of Zephaniah". Contact: Sis. Liz Posey robandlizposey@gmail.com.

29-4 Aug Western Christadelphian Bible School at Menucha Camp near Portland, OR. Speakers are Bro. Darren Guy (Halifax, UK): "Wrestling With Jacob"; Bro. Duncan Kenzie (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "21st Century Discipleship"; Bro. Marco Dondero (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "The Prism of Judgement and Wisdom's Rainbow". Website www.menchabibleschool.org. Contact Sis. Jane Szabo, registrar, 541-563-4726.

AUGUST 2012

11-17 Niagara Falls Bible School Theme: "Whatever you do — Work as unto the Lord". Contact Bruce and Barb Abel at 519-925-5297 or at bnb69abel@hotmail.ca.

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

25-31 Vancouver Island Bible Camp at Camp Pringle on beautiful Shawnigan Lake. Speakers are Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Ezekiel — Son of Man"; Bro. Ian Dangerfield (Australia): "Crucified and Risen With Christ"; Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON): "Micah — To Do Justly, to Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly Before Your God". Contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Rd., Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8. Phone: 250-758-4569 e-mail: yvonne2001@shaw.ca website: www.vibiblecamp.com.

SEPTEMBER 2012

1-2 Victoria, BC Fraternal Gathering. "The Scribes and Pharisees: Were Their Problems Our Problems?" by Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Contact csnobelen@csll.ca.

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)

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8 Hamilton Greenaway, ON Fraternal Picnic will be held at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Georgetown, ON, at 2:00pm. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the topic, "Who is My Neighbour? — Lessons from the Parable of the Good Samaritan". A picnic supper will be held at 5:00pm.

9-14 Adult Study Week at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Ballinafad, ON. The week consists of daily interactive Bible study, taken from the last week of Christ's life. Workbooks will be available. Participants may use their own camping equipment, or the covered wagons on site. There are also motels available nearby. The facilities used are provided by Sis. Annette Milne. All meals will be provided. Contact Bro. Jack Robinson jcrobins@worldchat.com or Bro. Peter Stonell peter.maggiestonell@gmail.com.

15-16 Paris Avenue, OH Fall Study Weekend Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, Australia) will be speaking on "The Return of Christ".

22 Brantford, ON Prophecy Day will be held this year with our Bro Matt Norton (Lismore, Aust.) speaking on the theme "Revelation Examined & Explained."

OCTOBER 2012

6-7 Atlanta Area, GA Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON).

6-7 Sussex, NB Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD).

5-7 Washington, DC Music Study weekend. Theme: "Make the Voice of His Praise to be Heard!". Study leader will be Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. Contact Bro. David Perry dperry1@gmail.com.

13-14 Echo Lake, NJ Fall Study weekend. The speaker is Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) and his subject is "Promises of the Kingdom".

November 2012

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 75

July, 2012

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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What is a Book Worth?

Anatoli Scharansky, a dissident Soviet Jew, kissed his wife goodbye as she left Russia for freedom in Israel. His parting words to her were, "I'll see you soon in Jerusalem." But Anatoli was detained and finally imprisoned. Their reunion in Jerusalem would not only be postponed, but it might never occur. During long years in Russian prisons and work camps Anatoli was stripped of his personal belongings. His only possession was a miniature copy of the Psalms. Once during his imprisonment, his refusal to release the book to the authorities cost him 130 days in solitary confinement.

Finally, twelve years after parting with his wife, he was offered freedom. In February 1986, as the world watched, Scharansky was allowed to walk away from Russian guards toward those who would take him to Jerusalem. But in the final moments of captivity, the guards tried again to confiscate the book of Psalms. Anatoli threw himself face down in the snow and refused to walk on to freedom without it. Those words had kept him alive during imprisonment. He would not go on to freedom without them.

Editorial

Grief

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13).

Introduction

In my editorial last month, I talked about the bitterness that is sometimes unfortunately associated with personal bereavement and tragedies. But there is an associated problem that also sometimes occurs. Some ecclesial members have a surprising reaction to any expression of grief over the death of a loved one or brother or sister. It is, I have heard commented, improper to express deep grief over the departure of a loved one, because we have the hope of resurrection, unlike the erroneous hope of some of those around us. I believe this is unfortunate, and perhaps causes unnecessary stress in already difficult situations. I believe grief at the departure of a loved one does not preclude the recognition of the hope we share: we sorrow, but not as those who have no such hope.

Bereavement¹

The death of a loved one, whether it is that of a parent, child, spouse, or anyone you are close to, is a deeply traumatic event. It is almost as though you have lost a limb, in many cases, because over the course of time they have become such a part of one's life. In previous generations grief, prolonged grief, was expected, and widows in particular wore obvious mourning clothing. We can think of Sister Lasius, daughter of John Thomas, who wore widow's black all her long life after her brief marriage to Benjamin Lasius. Sister Jane Roberts, a strong, competent wife and help-meet of Robert Roberts, is also shown in such raiment in all the later pictures I have seen of her. Such is no longer expected today: there is no outward sign of the grief that almost always accompanies the loss of a spouse. But grief is still deeply felt, even though the obvious outward signs are no longer seen. So how is one to cope?

Grief is inevitable where there has been love and affection — the greater the love, the deeper the grief. It goes through many distressing phases before there is acceptance and healing. It takes time and cannot be hurried. The loss of a loved one has much in common with major surgery: a living part of ourselves has been cut off. There is a deep internal wound, pain, mental and physical shock and an exhausting weariness of mind and body, along with sensitive scars which leave their mark for life. The patterns of grief are at last being recognized by doctors and others who have to deal with the medical and social problems that so often arise, especially when it has been bottled up and suppressed. In fact, in the recent discussions in the USA surrounding the update of the standard work on the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses, grief is proposed to be included as

a recognized condition. Unfortunately, this can mean the prescribing of strong psychotic medicines, when all that is really needed is the comfort of our hope and the support of the brethren and sisters.

So how can we help? We should attend the funeral if at all possible. It is a great comfort to the bereaved to feel others around them at this time, sharing the service and helping through this difficult day by their presence. Some, having suffered the trauma of bereavement, avoid attending the funerals of others, fearing the opening of personal wounds — but in fact this seldom happens. If we have suffered a similar bereavement, we have to remember how glad we ourselves were to have support at this time. If we have been very deeply hurt ourselves it is very unlikely that we shall ever feel quite so upset again, but the understanding gained from our own painful experience will enable us to give the love, sympathy and support that is so badly needed at this time. And if we do weep with those that weep it does not matter, for it shows that we care.

The full impact of loss comes after the relatives and friends have all gone, and then it is that kindly emails, letters, visits and phone calls are most appreciated. The problems that face the bereaved do not just disappear in a week or two: most of them are just beginning and may go on for a very long time. Just one visit, letter or phone call or offer of help is seldom sufficient. Loneliness and grief do not vanish just because the bereaved person is back at the meetings and putting on a brave face.

Indeed most of us find it of very difficult to appreciate the depth of those who have lost a companion of many years. When it says “*the two will become one flesh*” (Matt 19:5), the depth of the feeling of loss is only made greater by the closeness of the bond. And even though death comes to all men, the death of a spouse is rarely really expected: we hope against hope, and expect medical miracles, even when the prognosis is poor.

The shattering effect of a death sometimes reduces faith to a low ebb. Death itself is a frightening experience. Doubts may torment or the love of God be questioned. Here we must try to be reassuring, using Scriptural examples, and in every way possible encourage them to maintain their faith and attendance at the various meetings of the ecclesia. The discipline of doing this, plus the participation in worship — even passively, and the loving fellowship of the brethren and sisters, will prove helpful and healing, though it will not happen all at once. Time lessens the impact, but deep grief can linger for a long time. The deeper the love between the two, the greater the impact of the loss.

Our hope

The sorrow we have, as Paul expresses, is not as others in the world around us.

“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (1Thess 4:14).

So we have the hope of a future life in the Kingdom to come. We might not have the same type of grief, and we do not in general grieve for the lack of future hope of those who have died. But we do grieve for the lack of the companionship of the person. I know quite well my father had this hope, but I still grieve inside when

I think of him, even though he lived a long, fruitful and faithful life. To expect someone not to grieve for the loss of a loved one, and to comment critically when such grief is expressed, is most unhelpful in such a circumstance. We do have an imperative instead to help those in need, and it is clear that there is such a need in times of bereavement.

Death comes to all, and it is inevitable that we shall all experience some type of bereavement. Only some of us will feel the death of a spouse, but this is undoubtedly the most extreme form of a grief inducing experience. Grief might be “normal”, but is no less deeply felt. Some might seem to cope quite well, with little overt evidence of deep grief — but inside be feeling a sense of extreme hopelessness and loss of faith. Some might be very open in their grieving, but be strong in their faith. And some might be both openly grieving and experiencing a troublesome doubt about the love of God, as we mentioned above.

So how can we help ourselves, as opposed to help others cope with bereavement? Prayer is a vital part of any healing process, but it is very difficult to pray either when in a state of shock or in acute grief; the mind cannot concentrate. At this stage all we need to pray for is the strength to get through the immediate day, and if we limit our thinking and problems to the needs of that one day the strength is given. We do not need to plan ahead. The Lord Jesus tells us: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”* (Matt 6:34).

Conclusion

Grief, especially after bereavement, is a normal part of human experience. It might be helped by the hope we have, but we grieve for the loss of companionship, not for the loss of the hope of a future life. Indeed, we do not grieve quite as those who do not have hope, but we grieve nonetheless. We instead wait for the return of our Lord and Savior.

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1Thess 4:17-18).

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4).

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. Some of this material is based upon the helpful pamphlet by Sis. Joan Thomas: “Coping with Bereavement”.

**Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org.
Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone.**

**Submissions under 300 words are encouraged
— the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions
for length and clarity.**

Exhortation

The Way of Wisdom

I spend a fair amount of my day in traffic. This experience, no doubt shared by many readers of these words, has given rise to a useful analogy. We can call it the “road of life”.

Sometimes as we drive down this “road”, we come to dangerous intersections. Sometimes we refer to these as “forks in the road”. They are those moments where a choice we make or don’t make sets us on a course that could influence the rest of our journey. Do we stop or go? Turn right or left? Go ahead or turn back? Perhaps you feel like you are at a dangerous intersection right now in your life?

The Bible speaks about a divine resource we can utilize when we come to those intersections. It is called wisdom. Sometimes when we get to that fork in the road, or more plainly, a time of choosing, we will realize that we don’t have an answer, we don’t have wisdom.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:2-5).

James begins with the various trials we encounter in life. These are the difficulties and afflictions that come our way. It is during a time of trial that we may become so deeply involved in it, we can’t see our way out. Maybe it’s because we don’t understand the cause of the trial or its purpose. At those times, we are confused, and feel acutely our shortage of wisdom. In verse 5, James addresses this situation directly, and in verses 6-8 he cautions,

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Like forks in the road, life brings us choices, choices we don’t always see a clear answer to. In other words, life creates a demand for wisdom that we don’t always have.

What is wisdom?

There are various definitions of wisdom. Webster defines it as “the ability to make right use of knowledge”. My favorite is from dictionary.com: “knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action; sagacity, discernment, or insight”. It all sounds very intellectual.

There is an aspect of knowledge in wisdom. But it goes beyond that. Wisdom often involves the practical use of knowledge to deal with life’s ‘forks in the road’.

Wisdom, then, is the convergence of knowledge and skill that enables a person to make right choices at the fork in the road; more importantly, in our road to the Kingdom of God, the right choices that put us on the right path.

In Prov 1:7 we are told that the *“fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”*. From a Biblical perspective, if a person does not know God who created all things, revealed truth, and established absolute values, then he cannot be wise. How could a person make right choices without knowing God and His truth? So, wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, with a reverence that opens our ears to all God’s instruction and counsel.

The Need For Wisdom

To provide further clarity about wisdom, consider its opposite — foolishness. Indeed, Biblically, someone who is not wise, is a fool. Prov 1:7 contrasts the reverence and humility that marks the beginning of wisdom with the fool’s response to God: *“fools despise wisdom and instruction”*. The fool has no use for God’s instruction and in the end makes poor choices.

I can count many conundrums in my life, various forks, and forks that weren’t forks; sometimes you just don’t know what to do, because you don’t know the path that God wants you to follow. And these can be related to problems common to us all: financial problems, family problems, relationship problems, work problems. We really don’t always have clear answers at these intersections we come to in life.

But also think how many times have we thought we didn’t need help. As we often say, “I know what I’m doing”. The fool’s famous last words!

If we do not face up to our lack of wisdom, we will never ask for it. It is the arrogant person who thinks they never need counsel. It is the foolish person who refuses to admit his/her need for wisdom.

So when you face a situation you cannot figure out and you don’t know which way to turn or what to do or think, what do you do? James has the answer:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:5-6).

Wisdom is a divine gift from the One who knows. You don’t get wisdom by living a long life or experiencing many different things. You get it from God.

So rather than trying to figure things out yourself, or seeking advice from the world around you, turn to the one who knows — *God*. For God will give you wisdom liberally. He knows how badly you need it. James says God will give us wisdom without reproach, that is, without finding fault or giving insult. God wants us to come to Him for wisdom. We should not be too embarrassed or too proud to ask. We will not be reproached or demeaned, as sometimes happens in the world.

But there is one thing more we need to learn from James. Up until now, I’ve painted a very positive picture, but James adds this warning:

"...for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

What does this mean? It means what it says: Wisdom comes to those who ask in faith and do not doubt, but trust fully in the Lord.

To doubt means to be uncertain. The doubter is one who is uncertain of the Lord. This doubt could arise from an incomplete trust, from an incomplete love for God and His ways, from divided loyalties. The doubter is a wave of the sea tossed around by the wind, a vacillating Christian, one who cannot decide from one trial to the next whether they will really trust the Lord and follow His wisdom. Sadly, for this person, James adds, *"let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord"*.

There is a country song that starts "God, I'm down here on my knees cause it's the last place left to fall". Interestingly, this song draws from a quote by Abraham Lincoln: "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day."

There comes a time in our life when we have nowhere else to go, when those forks in the road have driven us to a place where we can't find an answer, only more questions. All the wisdom we've acquired through our life just isn't enough. At these times, think of Proverbs, and think of James. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and those who ask in faith *will* be given liberally of the wisdom of God.

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

Perhaps the real purpose of temptation, ultimately, is to teach us where to find true wisdom so that we may become *"perfect and complete, lacking nothing"* (James 1:4).

Nathan Sleeper (Glendale, AZ)

Special Invitation

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

You, your family and friends are invited to the

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

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

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

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

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

Bible Study

Some Thoughts on Romans 5:12

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”

There is the potential that we may not see clearly what is meant in Romans 5:12 since the verse is not a complete sentence and the conclusion of the thought is interrupted by a parenthetical phrase which begins in Rom 5:13. If we read the whole sentence without the parenthetical phrase we get a better idea of Paul's point. The incomplete sentence in Rom 5:12 is completed in Rom 5:18 by the following:

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

We can now clearly see that Paul's argument concerns justification in Christ and the existence of the two federal heads, or representatives: (1) Adam [and Eve] who did sin with the result of his [their] being a dying creature and we, his offspring, inheriting this dying nature and all that it brings with it, including a propensity to sin and (2) Jesus in whom we can be justified to life by a “free gift”. After baptism, we continue our lives in both of these systems — we continue in Adam, but we are now in covenant relationship and in Christ. Then we look forward to being changed at the judgment seat. The Apostle Paul summed it up quite succinctly in 1Cor 15:21, 22: *“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

However, we might ask the question, what is the value in that little parenthetical phrase at the end of Rom 5:12: *“for that all have sinned”*. Being an engineer by academic background and 50 years of practice, cause and effect are fundamental, just an apple falls because of gravity. The first part of Rom 5:12 makes it plain that death *“passed upon all men”* because Adam sinned. In the RSV, it is stated slightly differently: *“death spread to all men”*. There is the cause and the effect — Adam sinned and as a consequence the sentence of death was placed upon him. We, being his natural offspring, inherit the dying nature and with it the propensity towards sin — just like Adam.

The little phrase at the end of the sentence still needs an explanation consistent with the facts. The fact is that all of Adam's offspring don't die because they sin — they are dying creatures even before their birth; dying is a natural part of our being from the moment of conception in the womb. In that sense then, all men die because of Adam's sin. So what does the phrase mean, *“...for that all have sinned”*?

We certainly cannot argue that all have not sinned, for all [with the single exception of our Lord Jesus Christ] have sinned: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”* (Rom 3:23).

In many cases in the English language we can interchange “for” with “because”. But that is neither justifiable, nor does it give justice to the Greek in the case of Rom 5:12. The Greek word is defined as “a primary preposition; properly, meaning superimposition (of time, place, order, etc.), as a relation of distribution [with the genitive case], i.e. over, upon, etc.; of rest (with the det.) at, on, etc.; of direction (with the accusative case) towards, upon, etc.”¹ We can note that in no case in the Scriptures is the word translated “because”. So what is the meaning?

Bro L. G. Sargent gave this explanation:

“All suffer the consequences of one sin, yet it is no arbitrary sentence imposed by despotism, for all are sinners; heredity and environment combine, their inherent tendency finds opportunity, their impulses are stirred, and they sin. Not one could on his own account stand acceptably before the holiness of God. So ‘through the trespass of the one the many died’. No works of their own could gain life. Yet the gift of God surpassed the judgment of God, for it was by His act of grace that the One Man came as the second Adam, and reversed the effect of the first sin. This he did by ‘obedience even unto death’, so that as ‘through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous’ ”.²

Later, the editor of The Christadelphian summarized it thus: “There is no unfairness here. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*’ (Rom 3:23) and are therefore deserving of the death that inevitably awaits them”.³ Said another way, while it was our heredity that is the root cause of our dying nature, God is just in causing our dying condition in that we are inevitable sinners and therefore worthy of death.

There is a view prevalent in some quarters of our community that: “we do not die because Adam sinned...” But that simply defies the facts. We are dying creatures, part of a dying race, as a result of the sin of one man, our federal head, our representative, from whom all mankind has come. Like begets like.

Consider also the attendant proposition that is sometimes made, also based on Rom 5:12, which presumes that: “We die in Adam because we all sin.” But that is a reversal of cause and effect as stated in Rom 5:12 and goes against the laws of nature. When an embryo is in the womb it has inherent in it the dying nature, long before it has had the opportunity to sin. Even the Lord Jesus Christ was a dying creature, part of the federal system under Adam (born of a woman) and yet he was without sin.

I wonder also at the phrase, “*death passed upon all men*”. The passing has the context of death in motion, not dissimilar to the angel of death passing over the camp. It is often used in connection with walking, such as Jesus passing through Jericho in Luke 19:1. So it is like death coming over all men and settling upon them — death in motion.

Paul likens this to a sentence of death in 2Cor 1:9, 10: “*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the*

dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;". Here Paul is stating that he and Timothy were fully aware that they were dying creatures and prone to sin and therefore put their trust not in themselves but on the righteous judge who would raise them up at the last day.

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Notes:

1. Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.
2. "Some thoughts on Atonement", *Christadelphian* 1964 p 205.
3. "Christ Jesus Came Into The World To Save Sinners", *Christadelphian* 1987 p225.

Creation's Gospel

(8) The Waters of Judgment and Grace

Our considerations have noted the relationship between the word of God and water, as we contemplate how the features of creation project divine truths and principles. We observed how water can appear in a number of forms: rain, clouds, snow, rivers, seas, ice, steam, underground rivers, etc. We recognized the continuing Scriptural relationships between the clouds of heaven and the presence, power, glory and nature of our Creator. Falling from those clouds are the early and latter rains of our Creator's spoken word: the word made flesh and the word exercised in power. The next logical extension of this progressive theme would be to consider the bodies of water these rains and snows replenish.

These bodies of water present a consistent Scriptural relationship with the word of God in judgment, maintaining the seamless spiritual/creational theme of the water from the clouds through the rain and to the oceans, flood, seas and rivers. This judgment aspect, witnessed in these bodies of water, is focused in the diametrically opposed final judgment of life or death.

The saving and destroying flood waters of judgment

The flood waters of divine judgment, racing down from the collapsed upper firmament waters (Gen 1:6-8), submerged the continents (temporarily) deeper into the Earth's magma, delivering both death and life. The death aspect is quite obvious, eliminating perhaps two billion people. Peter references the life saving feature of the flood waters in his baptism parallel "...when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1Pet 3:20-21). The same creational features of the water that drowned the many, buoyed up the ark of salvation above the destruction, saving the eight. Here, Peter confirms Paul's inspired statements that it is the resurrection of Christ that will save us, while the death of Christ has reconciled us (Rom 5:10). The flood waters brought death to the many rejecting our Creator's righteousness, and brought life to the few confirming our Creator's righteousness.

The dramatic events in the Red Sea confirm this pattern. The children of Israel walked between two massive walls of water, standing to attention, as they travelled across the dried sea bed (Exod 14:21-22). When the children of God exited from between the water walls, the sea collapsed upon the arrogantly foolish Egyptian cavalry, bringing death to these sons of men. This body of water meant death to the flesh and life to the spirit, just like the flood waters.

Life to death in Egypt but death to life in the wilderness

The first of the ten plagues in Egypt converted the life sustaining Nile waters into blood, presenting a progression from life to death. However, after travelling an appropriate three days into the wilderness without water, the wilderness ecclesia witnesses the reverse progression. The poisonous waters of Marah were converted to life sustaining water by the tree cut down and thrown into the death waters to make them living waters, a symbol of the coming Messiah. The environment of Egypt projects the body of water image of life being transformed to death. The isolated wilderness ecclesial environment projects the reverse image of water being transformed from death to life.

Sea of life and sea of death

Our Creator painted this lesson geographically in the Promised Land for the enlightened, those with seeing eyes. There are two seas. The Sea of Galilee is a sea of life. Crops grow along the shores. Birds fly overhead. Herds drink its water. Children play in the water. Fishermen harvest Galilee's bounty. The Dead Sea is appropriately the lowest point on the surface of our planet. These waters cannot sustain animal life or vegetation. No fish live in these waters. Cold, grey rocks line the water's edge. The few venturing into the waters will spend days desperately trying to remove the salt residue (personal experience). There is a sea of life and there is a sea of death in the Promised Land, that was so carefully crafted by our Creator to educate those bearing His name.

The life to death river reversal

The Jordan River appropriately progresses from the Sea of Life to the Sea of Death. This Creator's portrait of the progression of life under the curse of sin and death was reversed when the feet of the priests bearing the golden Christ-ark stepped into the river's flow. This happened across from Jericho, before the gaping mouth of the Dead Sea, voraciously swallowing the waters of life into its waters of death. The Jordan river waters unnaturally receded all the way back to the city of Adam (by Zaretan, meaning "distress"), depicting how the curse of mortality can be reversed through our Messiah for the faithful all the way back to the distress by Adam. Appropriately those bearing the divine name were commanded to wait about 2,000 cubits back from this scene, before following this ark. This projects how all those bearing the Creator's family name, into which we are baptized, will wait about 2,000 years from when our Messiah would first experience this reversal of the curse of mortality (Josh 3:4). The pattern is consistent. Bodies of water relate the theme of the word of God in the judgment of death to the flesh and life to the spirit.

The baptismal waters of death and life

This pattern is perfectly projected in the ritual of baptism. The two baptismal stages of death and resurrection project what Jesus explained to John the Baptist was the fulfillment of all righteousness (Matt 3:15). Since Jesus was only concerned about his Father's righteousness, we can easily understand that baptism projects all the right-ness of our Creator. Christ's baptism certainly had nothing to do with the forgiveness of his sins. He had no sins to be forgiven. It had nothing to do with erasing any imagined inherited guilt from Adam's sin, as that would declare our Creator to be unrighteous and a liar. Christ's baptism was all about his Father's righteousness, just like his death and his resurrection. Christ's voluntary burial in water is a declaration that our Creator's initial demand to Adam and Eve, that sin must mean death, is a perfectly right and just understanding. All of paganism and apostate Christianity refuses that declaration of divine righteousness, blasphemously maintaining that sin can be just as eternal as righteousness. Rising from the water burial of baptism declares the rest of our Creator's righteousness. Despite the right-ness of our Creator's judgment that sin requires death, He is also right in gracefully extending life even though we correctly deserve death due to sin. Our creator's grace is not a contradiction of his judgment. He is right in both the baptismal burial shadow and the baptismal resurrection shadow of His right-ness. The baptismal bodies of water, the rivers and lakes and oceans and ponds and pools and tubs, all display this same theme of the word of God exercised in the judgment and the grace of death and life.

Our next commentary will further extend this progressive theme, to the water's spiritual/creational relationship to fruit bearing plant life, confirming even greater evidence of the breadth, height and depth of this relationship between the spoken word of God (creation) and the written word of God (Bible).

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The Joy of Sunday Schooling

The Questions We Ask Part 2

Good questions are powerful educational tools. As teachers, they help us accomplish many things. We may ask a question to stimulate thinking or promote discussion. We may also ask questions to find out things about our students. What do our students know about a subject? Do they understand a principle? Do they recognize when a principle applies? Do they know how to apply a principle when they have the opportunity to do so? Can they accurately evaluate a situation and faithfully plot their own course of action?

Asking questions is not an end in itself. The questions we ask should be designed to move the educational process forward, and the answers we get from our students should help us know which way is forward.

A few years ago I was working with a group of young people at one of our Bible schools. I posed a “What would you do if ...?” question for them to consider and then gave them time to think about it and write down their answers. When I opened the class for discussion, it did not take long to find out that some of them would turn their dog loose on a home invader or even use a gun to protect themselves if they could.

These were not ‘the right answers’ to the question, but they were *very meaningful answers*. They pointed the way forward. We went on to talk about the Biblical principles involved in the situation and to consider some real life examples. It was clear, however, that a few of the young people needed a lot more remediation.

The experience underscored the point for me: meaningful questions and answers can drive the educational process.

Verbal and written questions

The Lord Jesus was a very spontaneous teacher. He never asked written questions or waited for written answers. His questions were always verbal and called for immediate verbal responses. Sometimes people dodged his questions (e.g., Mark 11:29-33) and sometimes they refused to answer him (e.g., Mark 3:4; 9:33-34), but the force of his questions was never lost on his listeners. Much of his effectiveness was due to the fact that the questions he asked were always relevant to the situation at hand, and he had an impeccable sense of time and place when it came to asking the right question. He also followed up with powerful teaching when the response to his questions — or lack of response — called for it.

Our educational settings are usually more structured and formal than this. On-the-spot verbal questions remain very important, but written questions are a mainstay of much of our teaching. Written questions are usually prepared in advance, so this gives us time to think about the goals that we want to address. Written questions need to be well thought out: we need to know why we are asking the questions we pose.

Preparing questions

There are several types of questions that we can ask our students, depending on the level of thinking that we want to engage. The different types of questions are designed to reveal different things about our students’ knowledge of the Truth, so let’s look at some in detail.

Information recall questions. What do our students know about the Bible? What is the Biblical knowledge base that they have to draw on as they face daily life? These are the kinds of things we want to find out when we ask *information recall questions*. Information recall questions require students to do such things as *tell, list, select, match, name, quote, sort, recite, define, indicate what, when, who, or how many*.

The questions are phrased accordingly, for example:

- How many apostles did Jesus have?
- What are the four different kinds of soil in the parable of The Sower?

Recall questions are among the easiest to answer but it is not always easy to gauge what the answers tell us about our students. Students quickly learn to give the right answers to questions whether they buy into them or not. Interestingly, when Jesus asked recall questions, it was never an end in itself. He used recall questions as a springboard to deeper lessons (e.g., Mark 8:19-21; 8:27-29). Of course, it is good to keep in mind that Jesus was also dealing with adults. Our immediate reason for asking recall questions may be different because, in Sunday school at least, we are working with children. One of our priorities is to help the children develop a good Biblical knowledge base.

Comprehension questions. How well do our students understand the Bible? Can they accurately explain the meaning of what they read in its pages? Do they recognize the godly significance of its principles? These are the kinds of things we can find out when we ask *comprehension questions*. There are two kinds of comprehension questions: one looks for the *interpretation* of information; the other looks for the ability to *transfer* information to new settings. *Interpretation* questions require students to *describe, explain, discuss, restate, tell in your own words, review, interpret, paraphrase, account for, outline, express how or why*.

For example:

- Tell what it means to honor your father and mother?
- Explain 2Tim 3:16-17 in your own words.

Questions that require a *transfer* of information ask students to do such things as *predict, project, propose, expand, contemplate, imagine*.

For example:

- Why do you want the kingdom of God to come?
- Do you think Jesus would run for public office if he were here today? Give reasons for your answer.

Comprehension questions can open the door for good follow up discussion. They commonly offer the kind of latitude that allows teacher and students to share a breadth of Biblical insights and learn from each other.

Application questions. At this point, we are interested in finding out if our students know what to do with their Bible knowledge. Understanding brings responsibility. *Application questions* can begin to tell us how well our students understand the Bible and buy into its principles of life. With application questions, we want our students to show the ability to do such things as *apply, adopt, relate, try, make use of, put into action, demonstrate, choose, solve*.

For example:

- List three ways that you can honor your father and mother this week.
- What does keeping the first commandment (Mark 12:28-30) mean to you?
- What would you do if ...?

Application questions can lead to real action. They have the potential to be more than questions on a page or topics of discussion in a classroom. After Jesus taught mercy in the parable of The Good Samaritan, he issued a challenge: “*Go and do*

likewise". Good application questions can provide an opportunity for teacher and students to put the principles of the Truth into practice.

Analysis questions. Can our students pick out the important details of a Bible passage? Do they recognize the Biblical principles that are involved and do they understand the implications that follow from them? These are some of the things we can find out with *analysis questions*. Analysis questions ask our students to *search for, examine, breakdown, identify, distinguish, compare, contrast, reason, and relate*.

For example:

- Where did Noah's faith come from? How did Noah show that he had faith? See Heb 11:7.
- How many life-changing decisions did the younger son make in the parable of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)? Identify two of these decisions and tell the outcome of each one.

Jesus asked some simple but very penetrating analysis questions in the course of his teaching. Here are two: "*So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?*" (Luke 10:36) and "*Which of the two did the will of his father?*" (Matt 21:31). Notice from the context of each that Jesus did not think it was enough just to ask the question and get the right answer. In both instances he went on to drive home the implications that followed from the answer: the self-excusing person needed to show mercy to anyone in need and the self-righteous person needed to repent and believe the gospel.

Synthesis questions. If analysis looks at the component parts of Scripture, synthesis puts the parts together. How well do our students get the big picture? Can they draw Scripture together and begin to articulate its great principles? These are the kinds of things we want to find out when we ask *synthesis questions*. Synthesis questions require students to do such things as *collect, put together, organize, arrange, combine, plan, create, build, compose, formulate*.

For example:

- Act out the story of Cain and Abel.
- What are the key things that you would tell a friend who wants to know what you believe?
- Use a concordance and cross-references to identify at least ten Bible passages that tell us something about the state of the dead. Summarize your findings.
- Write a prayer about ... (an assigned topic).

Evaluation questions. How well do our students know the mind of God? Can they align their thinking with His? Does their value system reflect God's value system? *Evaluation questions* probe the heart that motivates the person. These are questions that ask our students to *evaluate, judge, decide, appraise, assess, weigh, prioritize, accept, reject, argue, defend, choose, tell if one should or should not*.

For example:

- Was it right or wrong for David to kill Goliath? Explain your answer.

- Write a prayer about ... (a topic of the student's choice).
- What are your views on abortion?
- Why would you accept a demanding job promotion that doubles your salary?
- Why would you turn down a demanding job promotion that doubles your salary?

Discipleship calls for constant evaluation of one's personal beliefs and way of life. The ability to do this well reflects a good understanding of the revealed will of God.

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Youth Speaks

2 Thessalonians 2 — Brethren, Stand Fast

As noted in earlier articles, when the apostle Paul brought the gospel to Thessalonica, the response from the majority of the Jews was far from pleasant. While some of them believed and while some of the Greeks were willing to come to the Truth, the Jews did not look on Paul's preaching favorably:

“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people” (Acts 17:5).

Paul's preaching brought about an assault on Jason's house — the Jews stormed in, looking for Paul and Silas. Eventually, the rulers of the city put down the tumult, but all throughout the new ecclesia's existence, the Jews (and even other Gentiles) continued to cause problems. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle alluded to these further persecutions (1Thess 2:14). Again, in the second epistle, Paul continued that same theme:

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the ecclesia of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2Thess 1:4-5).

At the time that Paul penned the second epistle, he was able to write of the “persecutions and tribulations” that they were currently enduring! The troubles which they had suffered when Paul and Silas had first preached in the city had *never actually stopped*. Thus, the new ecclesia in Thessalonica had quite a treacherous road to the kingdom — not only did they have to watch for sin within their own minds, but they also had physical dangers around them. The prospect of leaving the faith and turning back to beliefs which were more accepted, would have been fairly tantalizing. Because of this possible temptation the apostle Paul continually focused on the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, all throughout both of his epistles. It was his major theme throughout his letters to these believers — it is mentioned

in every chapter in the first epistle (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:14-17; 5:23) and in every chapter in the second (1:7-10; 2:1; 3:5). Despite all of the suffering and pain that they had to endure at the present time, the apostle reminded the Thessalonians that everything would change at the coming of the Lord. They were to set their eyes on the time that was to come, rather than thinking about the present troubles.

Yet unfortunately, it appears as though there was someone — most likely one of the Judaizers — who wanted to cause problems in the new ecclesia. He had noticed Paul's continual emphasis upon the coming of Christ and had sought to use that emphasis to sow falsehood within the ranks of the believers. Thus begins the second chapter of the second epistle.

The man of sin

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (2Thess 2:1-2).

The apostle had something extremely important to communicate to the believers — notice the phrase *“now we beseech you”* (cp. Phil 4:3; 1Thess 4:1; 1Thess 5:12). His command was for the brethren to stand strong with what they had been taught. Though someone was going around the ecclesia trying to create conflict by teaching that “the day of Christ is at hand” or that it had arrived, the believers were not to become involved. Paul urged them not to believe this new idea. Though he had constantly emphasized the coming of Christ and had used it to remind the brethren of the coming glory, *that day had not yet come* — and Paul could absolutely prove it.

The apostle had not had much time to preach and speak to the ecclesia in Thessalonica before he had been driven out by the Jews, but in the short time that he was there, he was able to speak to them about a blasphemous system that would stand against God. Referencing that previous teaching, the apostle reminded them that they had been taught that the Lord Jesus could not yet come until this system had been revealed:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you I told you these things?” (2Thess 2:3-5).

Referring back to what he had taught them before, Paul reminded the brethren that the day of Christ could not possibly have come — because the man of sin had not been revealed. No “falling away” had created an entity that stood against all that is called God or that is worshipped. No “falling away” had even come close to creating something that would sit in a temple of God and claim to be God. The believers could look around them and see that there was *no Christian group* that could possibly fit these characteristics. It simply wasn't possible — because of

the rule of the Romans, no Christian group could even dream of having enough power to be exalted or to oppose things that are worshipped.

So the day of Christ could not yet have come — but, Paul still gave the believers hope. Though the day had not yet come, they could easily identify what it was that was preventing the man of sin from being revealed.

“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time” (2Thess 2:6).

When the apostle wrote to them about the man of sin, the brethren *knew* exactly what it was that was holding back this “falling away” from being revealed — this was not something that Paul needed to tell them. For many of them, their minds likely would have flashed to the current Roman government. As long as pagan Caesars ruled over the empire, no Christian movement would be able to gain the power to become the man of sin. However, once that restraining force was removed — perhaps this falling away could take root. At least, according to the apostle, this was what would happen — when the restraining force was taken away, the man of sin would reveal itself:

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2Thess 2:7-8).

Behind the scenes, the man of sin was already working — but it would only be revealed when the restraining power was taken away. Eventually, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, this blasphemous system would be destroyed. It would have an existence that would last from the time of the apostle all the way to the coming of the Lord Jesus — but it would not truly come to power and fruition until paganism was removed.

Thus, while it could clearly be seen that the Lord would not come until the man of sin had been revealed (because Christ was going to destroy it!), the brethren would also have some type of prophetic sign for which they could look. They would look for the downfall of the pagan Roman system — knowing that when they saw it fall, then the man of sin would be uncovered.

Amazingly, that’s exactly what happened.

The revealing of the man of sin

In AD 324, the Roman empire was thrown into a civil war. There were two rulers of the empire — Constantine and Licinius. For a number of years, the two had worked together fairly well; however, as time passed, their religions began to clash. Constantine was a Christian. Licinius was a pagan. Together, in AD 313, they had passed the Edict of Milan — a document which granted religious toleration throughout all of the Roman domain. Nevertheless, in AD 320, Licinius began to renew his aggression towards the Christians, an act which Constantine took as a threat. The dissonance between the two men eventually culminated in the civil war of AD 324 — with Constantine and Christianity emerging as the victor.

From that time on (except during the reign of one emperor), paganism would be cast aside in the Roman empire. *The restraining power would be pushed away* — and just as Paul had written, the man of sin was revealed. In the place of paganism came Christianity; but it wasn't the Christianity of the apostles. It was a Christianity which had been twisted and which had lost essential elements of the true gospel which had once been preached by the Lord Jesus. It was a Christianity which was a *falling away* from what was true — and in fact, that falling away developed into something that perfectly fit all of the characteristics which were listed by the apostle Paul.

In Paul's description of the man of sin, he wrote that this iniquitous system would have all of the following characteristics:

- Christian origins (falling away) (v. 3)
- Oppositional attitude towards God (v. 4)
- Prideful and blasphemous spirit (v. 4)
- Ability to sit in a temple of God and proclaim to be God (v. 4)
- First century roots (v. 7)
- Restrained and later revealed (v. 6-8)
- Ability to perform signs and lying wonders (v. 9)

There are other characteristics, but for the purposes of this article, these are enough. Each of these attributes given by the apostle Paul fit perfectly with the system that emerged after the fall of paganism in the Roman Empire. When paganism was removed from the scene, Constantine's Christian empire opened the door for the Papacy and Catholicism to develop. This form of Christianity — or this *falling away* from true Christianity — falls nicely in line with each of the seven characteristics listed above. It has Christian origins. It has opposed God in burning translations of His Word and restricting its reading for hundreds of years. It has been full of pride, claiming that the Pope is the *Vicar of Christ* and the full representative of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. It is headed by one man who sits in a *temple* and proclaims that he is God's mouthpiece. It traces its roots back to the first century. It was restrained, and later revealed at the time of Constantine. It claims to work miracles through folly such as transubstantiation, relic veneration, and worship of the saints.

All of the characteristics fit — and thus the prophesied “man of sin” is Catholicism led by the sinful man himself, the Pope. It was this system of which Paul warned the believers — telling them that the day of Christ would not come until it had been revealed. This man of sin would continue to reign, until one day, the Lord Jesus Christ would come and put an end to its haughty arrogance and iniquity.

Conclusion

All of this was written to the brethren for the purpose of encouraging them to be steadfast. Paul wanted them to recognize and realize that the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ had already come was utterly fallacious. They had not missed the second coming. Yet there was still more in his words to the brethren. Not only did this example prove to them that the ideas they had been hearing were incor-

rect, but they also served to warn the believers of something sinful and subtle that was coming. A falling away was already working amongst their ranks — and this was something which the brethren needed to firmly stand against. Unlike the followers of this apostasy, the believers in Thessalonica were encouraged to *love the Truth* (2 Thess 2:10) and continue steadfastly in what they had been taught (2Thess 2:15). By doing this, they would continue in the salvation to which they had been called (2Thess 2:13) — and we can do the same thing. The lesson to the brethren of the first century is the same lesson to us today. All around us, the man of sin and the harlot daughters of Protestantism are fully active and waging a war on the Truth. May we stand fast in what we have been taught. May we continue to love the Truth and do all that we can to wrestle against falsehood. May we treasure the understanding that we have been given and speak that gospel message with all whom we come in contact — sharing the opportunity for salvation and life everlasting. Amen.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

The Lord is Faithful — 2 Thessalonians 3

“Requesting prayers”

Paul begins the last chapter of 2 Thessalonians with a request to the Thessalonian Ecclesia, asking for their prayers — in hopes that the Word might spread rapidly abroad and that ultimately the Lord would be glorified. It is interesting to note, that in 1Thess 1:2 we find that Paul begins with letting the Thessalonians know that *“he had prayed for them”* and their spiritual well being. Now, here in 2Thess 3 Paul is appealing for *“their prayers”*.

What a wonderful example of who we should be praying for! We should pray for one another, remembering the words of James:

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”
(James 5:16 NIV).

It is not always easy to pray for others as we might have difficulties in our own lives. But this is such an important aspect for us to develop in our spiritual walk and discipleship. It helps mold our hearts and minds to be more like Christ. When we pray for others, we are “putting to death” the selfish nature that comes so easily to us, and seeking the well-being of others.

Paul sought deliverance from unrighteous, ungodly, and faithless men. He requested prayers from the brethren, as he continued the preaching of the Word beyond Thessalonica. In 1Thess 2:14, we find that the Thessalonians suffered persecution from their own countrymen because of their faith in the gospel message. The brothers and sisters would be able to relate to his struggle and earnestly pray for Paul’s deliverance.

It is sad to read the sentence, *“all men have not faith”* (2Thess 3:2). One wishes that the faithless people today would just listen to the gospel message and have the Word change their hearts to believe on God’s Truth. It is also sad to think about

the **many** “who have received not the love of the truth,” (2Thess 2:10) but have been deceived by the man of sin. Nevertheless, we should rejoice that the Lord is faithful and we believe He will keep us from evil. As he says in 1Thess 3:13 — “to the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before your God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”. In John we have a great example of Christ keeping the disciples from evil:

“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in they name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12).

It is also hard not to think back to the prayer Christ gave in Matt 6:13, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...”.

Just like the Thessalonians, if we are doing and will continue to do the things which God has commanded us, then the Lord will direct our hearts into the patient waiting for Christ. It takes an active spiritual life. One cannot expect the Lord to direct our heart if our spiritual life is inactive. How could one expect to have their heart directed into the love of God or the patient waiting for Christ if we fail to follow the commandments of God?

“Withdraw from the disorderly brother”

Paul commands the Thessalonian Ecclesia to withdraw from any brother that walks disorderly, following not after the traditions taught by word or epistle (see 2Thess 2:15). Paul actually had already asked the Ecclesia to exhort the “unruly” back in 1Thess 5:14, which is the same word used in 2Thess 3:6 for “disorderly”. Paul finds need to bring this point up again in a whole section of verses here in chapter 3. Withdraw is a strong word, so what exactly does Paul mean when he says withdraw yourself from that brother? To add to that, how do the next few verses fit into this equation of withdrawing oneself?

“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2Thess 3:14-15).

How does one go about withdrawing oneself from someone who is “disorderly” and also admonishing him as a brother? It is interesting to note that the word “ashamed” means “to shame one or to be ashamed or *to turn about*”. The whole idea of having no company with the disorderly brother is so that he may be ashamed of his conduct and *will turn back* to living God’s commands. Through shame, this brother is to change his ways. And when we don’t have company with a brother because of their disorderly conduct, then we need to heed the words written in verse 15, “Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother” (NIV). This is not always easy to do when a brother is perverting God’s ways, but we must find a way to warn that brother that their current disorderly conduct will lead to eternal death! Just as we saw written before, we are to have this type of attitude when we exhort the unruly:

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none

render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (1Thess 5:14-15).

“Lead by example”

Paul expected that the ecclesia would be able to follow his words regarding orderly behavior because he had sought to demonstrate that type of behavior himself:

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake” (1Thess 1:5).

Paul would expect orderly conduct from the Thessalonians because he had already spoken to them about how powerful their example has been to other areas. In 1Thess 1:7, Paul writes about how the Thessalonians are an example for the other ecclesias in Macedonia and Achaia. Continuing through verses 8 to 10, Paul writes that the example of the Thessalonians spread even *beyond* the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. This section proves how important an ecclesia’s actions and conduct are. It is incredible to think about how the example of one ecclesia would change the hearts of men and women who lived many miles away from Thessalonica.

Paul would have conducted himself properly knowing that his actions must match up with the words he was writing and preaching. Something for us to consider is that we can do as much, if not more, preaching by the way we conduct ourselves! It is vital that our actions match what we preach. Credibility can be lost quickly when someone notices that our actions are not in line with our preaching.

“Busy Bodies”

Paul sacrificed sleep to ensure that he was a model example, as well as not being a burden to others. He preached during the day and worked during the night. Not being a burden to others must have been a tiring task. It is hard to imagine Paul traveling around preaching and spreading the gospel message while supporting himself financially. But he did it! This is an element of Paul’s life I tend to look over — he found a way to support himself during his missionary travels. He did not rely upon the Thessalonians to provide for his living needs. Paul writes:

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2Thess 3:10).

It is a rule that Paul took seriously. He wanted to place no extra weight upon the ecclesia. No one could accuse him of being a burden because of the way he lived his life, *“laboring and travailing night and day”*.

When ecclesial issues arise it can cause stressful and difficult situations, but the issues must be handled in an appropriate manner. Paul finds himself addressing the issue of idleness —someone who could work but had chosen instead not to work. This matter was also addressed before, where Paul writes:

“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1Thess 4:11).

This must have been a matter of which Paul was concerned because he wants to remind the Thessalonians that idleness is no way to live your life. Paul addresses these members as “busy bodies,” which means “to busy one’s self about trifling, needless, useless matters” and the word is sometimes used for those who are nosy in other’s affairs. A busy body would burden the ecclesia because now someone has to support those members who have chosen not to work. The burden would go beyond just the physical needs that would be needed to support the idle. I can only imagine that this would cause strife between members whose personality had no tolerance for those who had chosen not to work. Paul continues on to “command and urge” (NIV) those idle members to “*settle down and earn the bread they eat*” (NIV).

“Be not weary in well doing”

Paul encourages those brothers and sisters who are living their life according to the commandments Paul had written to them. His request is for them to not become “weary in well doing”. The NIV says “*never tire of doing what is right*”. The margin for “weary” reads “be...or faint not,” and it is hard not to reference the words of Paul:

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but through our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor 4:15-18).

If the Thessalonians would hold fast to the commands and teaching of Paul while fainting not due to the afflictions suffered during the here and now, then they would have their hearts directed into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2Thess 3:5). It is this that we also hope for, having our hearts directed and having patience while we wait for Christ’s return. If we fight the good fight and faint not, while the outward man will perish, the inward man will be renewed day by day, and the eternal things which are currently unseen will eventually become a reality as we lay hold on eternal life at the second coming of our Lord.

David Clubb (Simi Hills, CA)

“Gideon... worshiped God. He returned to the camp and called out, ‘Get up! The LORD has given the Midianites into your hands’ ” (Jdgs 7:15).

Gideon’s 300 men had just witnessed more than 99% of their fellows sent away, and now they are told, ‘The battle is as good as won!’ Many years later, a greater than Gideon told his followers, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). And so we need not fear anything! We need not even fear being only a “little flock,” for “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

George Booker

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship

(7) Guideline #6: *“Hard work always pays off; mere talk puts no bread on the table” (Prov. 14:23 The MSG).*

Careers through the ages

Managing jobs and careers is a major challenge for any marriage in the modern world. From the time the New Testament was written till the period when the Christadelphian pioneer brethren wrote, the workplace environment had hardly changed. While it is difficult to get precise figures for the types of jobs and careers people pursued in Biblical lands in the first century A.D. most guesstimates presume that somewhere around 90% of the population were involved in agriculture and the remainder were in trade professions, or worked as government servants for their Roman masters, or served in the Legions. The Apostle Paul was a tentmaker as were his compatriots Priscilla and Aquila. Our Lord Jesus was a carpenter; Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen (and possibly also Philip); Matthew was in effect a Roman civil servant and Lydia in the luxury clothing business.¹

In a preindustrial agricultural and craft society husbands and wives, as well as their children, usually formed a self-contained economic unit. Women worked alongside their fathers, or later their husbands, and had work skills commensurate with careers that were fashioned by that milieu. Priscilla and Aquila worked side by side in their tent making profession. Jesus' craft he no doubt learned from working as an apprentice to Joseph, also a carpenter. The lessons learned as a carpenter were well remembered in some of Jesus' parables e.g. the mote and the beam, and the necessity for building a house on a firm foundation. Dorcas was a seamstress and I suggest, consistent with 1st century culture, that it was a profession she probably practiced with her husband and continued doing so after becoming a widow.² The nature of the workplace didn't change very much over the next 1800 years and I am familiar with this personally. My maternal grandfather and grandmother worked together in their own tailor shop throughout the 1930s during the Great Depression and my grandfather subsequently taught my mother how to be a seamstress. The change from primarily an ancient long-standing agricultural to an industrial society has tracked almost parallel to the lifetime so far of our own Christadelphian movement. The Table below illustrates the enormous change in the work environment from 1790 to the beginning of the 21st century.³

This vast change has important implications on the marriage relationship and has created challenging issues for husbands and wives that never could have been envisaged by earlier generations of Christadelphians. Perhaps only in the Amish community has the strain of the modern workplace changes, and their challenges upon the marriage relationship, been avoided.

Table 1 — Percent of workforce involved in Agriculture.

1790	85 to 90%
1870 ⁴	70 to 80%
1900	41.0%
1930	21.5%
1945	16.0%
1970	4.0%
2002	1.9%

The modern workplace

What specific challenges does the modern workplace put upon us? Many social commentators have indicated that the United States, and most other nations comprising what was formerly known as industrial societies, have actually entered a new economic phase dubbed the “post-industrial” age. In this new economic world jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, or crafts will provide severely limited chances for employment and what will matter instead will be information, creativity and technical skills. To prepare oneself for this new paradigm it is important for one to acquire as much education as one is capable of handling. I know that in my parents’ generation (pre-1940s) if you didn’t have a high school diploma your chances of gainful employment were greatly diminished, but if one was willing to work hard there were still a number of reasonable decently paying unskilled and semi-skilled factory jobs available. Post 1950s the need for at least a college bachelor’s degree became more and more the bottom line for having a chance at a lifelong gainful career. The number of college graduates in the United States in the year 2003 was 40,621,000, a 40% increase over the previous decade and this number continues to rise.⁵ This is a number that amounts to greater than 25.6% of the adult population compared with 2.7% of that population segment in 1910.⁶ These figures do not include those graduating from Community Colleges or other post-high school training programs.

Now it is entirely possible that some in our community still may be able to pursue work on the family farm, or in a family business, or be so clever they don’t need a college education to survive in the post-industrial society. After all some of our most successful business men in America, including the founders of Microsoft and Facebook, never graduated from college, but they are the exception not the rule. Too many marriages have floundered on the rocks of financial instability. Furthermore, if something unfortunate happens in a marriage, which causes one partner to exit the relationship, be it by divorce or sadly by death; if the remaining partner has no employable job skills the result can only be disastrous.

In entering a marriage it is important that both partners recognize the need for financial stability and this can only be achieved if both have a mature approach to what it takes to accomplish this goal. The words of Solomon provide us practi-

cal advice: *“The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing”* (Prov 20:4 ESV). And also: *“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty”* (Prov 21:5 ESV). The exhortation here is that planning for the future is something that the Word of God wants us to do. If one is to enter into the responsibilities of a marriage, and be further blessed perhaps with children, then one owes it to those in our care to be able to support them. There have been times in our community that some have felt that prophetic fulfillment was so clear that the second coming Lord Jesus eminent, and therefore there was no need to pursue an education or a career because soon enough we would be in the kingdom. I well remember that when I was preparing to go to college in the mid-1950s that the long yearned for establishment of the State of Israel, as an independent nation, had occurred only a few years earlier and this had created much eager anticipation that the Kingdom was near at hand. Several brethren advised me that I was perhaps wasting my time going to college: that it would only detract from my potential time to serve the Lord in those last days. Fortunately, my parents did not share this view; instead they encouraged me to get as much training as possible, being aware that we know *neither the day nor the hour that the Lord will come*.⁷ Therefore, *“Engage in business until I come”*.⁸ Furthermore, if I hadn’t obtained at least some further education beyond High School, I am certain no one would want to read anything written in the manner that I wrote when I was 17 years old!

In planning a job career it is essential that one have a passion in life to do something specific, and do it well, whether it is to be an artist, a salesmen, a professional, automobile mechanic, or whatever.⁹ Generally, if one is dedicated to doing something, one will be willing to do the hard work to do it admirably and undoubtedly success will follow. Solomon tells us: *“Hard work always pays off; mere talk puts no bread on the table”* (Prov 14:23 The MSG). If one finds that a prospective spouse is lazy, unfocused and unwilling to dedicate themselves to accomplishing sometimes even unpleasant tasks — that type of person is a risk to marry, period. These days one cannot guarantee lifetime employment in almost any company. Who would have thought that some of the largest most successful corporations in the world would go bankrupt in the 21st century. The first job I had out of college was with a long established utility company, which no longer even exists, and the research laboratory buildings and grounds where I worked were sold for real estate development a long time ago. This is one compelling reason, among others, that it is wise if both partners in a marriage have trained for some marketable job skills. My Dad was frequently out of work and if it hadn’t been for my mother’s skills as a seamstress, that put food on the table, we would have been street people, or even worse had to move in with relatives!

There is a caveat here that needs to be mentioned. Precisely because we do not know the day or hour of our Lord’s return, nor the hour of our own demise (which in effect is the instant of the Lord’s return for the departed individual) it is incumbent upon us not to neglect the work of the Lord at any stage of our lives. We should not sacrifice Christ on the altar of striving for material success. It is entirely possible to take the attitude “I am too busy trying to obtain an education

to have time right now to do any service for the Lord". This can unfortunately include neglecting to attend Bible classes and Memorial services. As life goes on this attitude can carry over to behavior, which says, "sorry, I have to develop my career first". This leads to the excuse that "my boss demands my time and I need to dedicate myself to moving up the career ladder", only to find as one moves up the ladder employment demands swallow more and more of one's time squeezing out the Truth. Finally in the twilight of one's lifetime one can take the view that you are too old to contribute much to the Ecclesia, and must leave it all to the younger generation. Thus, one can fritter away a whole lifetime being on the fringes of Ecclesial service, or doing it in such a shabby fashion that we are not giving it the time and energy it deserves or sadly, even neglecting it entirely. Balance is an important attribute in life and if one follows the destructive path I just outlined it would be a terrible example indeed to set for our children, and often puts an extreme emotional burden on the other spouse. In a marriage one needs not only to provide for the material wellbeing of our spouse and children (if so blessed), but also for their spiritual welfare as well.

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians (2Thess 3:6-12) provides us some insight into how the apostle viewed the role of work in the life of Christian. In fact he puts his exhortation in the form of a command and not a mere suggestion: "...*Keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from*" (v. 6 ESV). By tradition he meant his own example that he set for them while in their company: "...*you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you*" (v. 7, 8 ESV). Finally, the apostle puts the command quite bluntly: "...*If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat*" (v. 10 ESV).

This points out another obligation of a married couple, and that is the obligation to support the ecclesial family, and not be supported by it. There may be indeed times when interim welfare is needed to get a family by a difficult personal situation, but none should enter into a marriage (or be in a marriage) thinking they automatically can call upon the ecclesia to satisfy their material desires. The ecclesia is a community linked together by a common faith and hope, but not necessarily by uniform financial and social resources.

This has ever been the case, in the first century ecclesias had "Masters" and "slaves" as members of the same congregation (Cp. Philemon).¹⁰ Members of Caesar's household shared communion with brothers and sisters who were mere plebeians. Correspondently, in the household of faith we have members of every social and economic segment being part of the same shared communion. The ecclesia is not a social country club that restricts membership based on worldly social standards. But this diversity of social, economic and education demography makes it all too easy for a young married couple to look at what others have in terms of material comforts, that perhaps may have taken them a lifetime of hard work to achieve, and expect the same as it were, instantly. Thus placing economic demands upon the martial partnership that can lead to economic ruin and put the marriage in jeopardy of dissolution.

The antidote to the dilemma of needing to provide for our families, while at the same time being content to live within the limits of what a couple is individually capable of achieving, are spelled out by the wisdom of Jesus Christ. *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”* (Matt 6:25-33 ESV).

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Next: *Children are a heritage from the LORD*

Notes:

1. Lydia (see Acts 16:14) “a seller of purple”. Rome, Egypt, and Persia all used purple as the imperial standard. Purple dyes were rare and expensive; only the rich had access to them. The purple colorants used came from different sources, most from the dye extraction from fish or insects. ... It took some 12,000 shellfish to extract 1.5 grams of the pure dye. Cited from: <http://pffc-online.com/mag/1348-paper-history-shellfish-royalty>
2. A fairly complete list of the various occupations mentioned in the Bible can be found at the website: <http://www.sundayschoolresources.com/jobsinthebible.htm>
3. Data taken from the “Economic Research Service”, United States Department of Agriculture. Interestingly data for 2007 from the United Nations shows approximately 1.9% of the population of the United Kingdom workforce was involved in agriculture and only slightly higher figures applied for France, Germany and Italy.
4. 1869 was the first year during which our Community fraternal magazine was entitled *The Christadelphian*.
5. Data from the National Science Foundation.
6. Data taken from: Digest of Education Statistics, 2001 published by the National Center for Education Statistics.
7. Cp. Matt 24:42-50
8. Luke 19:13 ESV — the AV says “occupy till I come” — the whole parable here is instructive.
9. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (see www.bls.gov) website has all sorts of relevant information on Job prospects and occupational outlooks for the coming years in the United States economy. A valuable information source for someone seeking to plan a career or change career direction.
10. And such was the case in the Christadelphian movement before the American Civil War.

Christ, who was to change the face and heart of the world, lived out his human life in a very small country. The traveler to Palestine, accustomed subconsciously to magnify everything connected with Jesus, is astonished to find how short are the distances and how insignificant the towns.

Capernaum and Nazareth are not more than a day's journey apart. The distance from Jericho to Jerusalem is barely thirty miles. A motorcar can easily cross Palestine from north to south in a day's journey; an airplane can fly from east to west in a quarter of an hour.

This small compartment of the world, whose renown eclipses the magnitude of continents, is barely the size of the province of Brittany in France [or the state of Maryland in the United States].

Daniel Rops, Jesus and His Times, pp. 67,68

Forgiveness (5)

At this point, our series turns a corner. The previous articles established how vital and full of blessing it is to forgive someone. Now we begin to move into the realm of “how”. Sometimes we are totally convinced that we want to forgive someone, but if we have a humdinger of a forgiveness issue with us right now, we know exactly how big a challenge that can be. If we don’t have a forgiveness challenge at the moment, all we have to do is live a little longer. Opportunities are everywhere!

This article will begin discussing the concepts about and ways to adjust our thinking. The next article will offer 24 activities that we can use to help us with our process.

Is it necessary to change our thinking? Is it even possible? How is it done? This article will spend some time on the structure of the brain God created for us and how He has made provision for us to change physiologically.

The concept for changing our minds comes from the Holy Scriptures:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2).

This shows that the mind *can* change, even renew! Also in the same vein:

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22-24).

Only God could have created our minds in a way that would allow us to change them.

The putting off and the putting on, mentioned in the Ephesians passage above, is like changing our clothes. First, we take off a piece of clothing; this is where the lessons about confession and repentance come in. We have begun the process! Putting off things may not come easily but we can recognize that we wish to.

The mind

The human brain has 80 to 120 billion nerve cells called neurons. It is estimated that the human brain has a storage capacity of about 2.5 petabytes, comparable to a DVR storing three million hours of TV shows. It’s all run electrochemically, like a battery. The time it takes to communicate from cell to cell is 1/1,000 of a second. This feature has ramifications. For example, the brain thinks at about 1,250 words per minute, but we can only speak at 250 words per minute. We can think faster than we are able to put those thoughts into words: five times faster. This explains why our minds can easily wander while we are supposedly concentrating on what someone is saying. We are quite capable of thinking in between their words.

What does this mean? Let’s say we walk into meeting one day. Without being really fully aware, our eyes and brain are scanning the room and we are assessing

the following:

- Am I comfortable and confident around these people?
- Am I appropriately dressed in comparison?
- Do I know anybody here?
- Can I see the speaker from any seat?
- Where is the most comfortable place to sit?

On the surface, we aren't aware of all these calculations. What really happened is we walked into the room, glanced around and found a seat. We probably can't say for sure why we picked that seat, or even if there was a process. But there was a process and it had to do with data collected from every time we have ever walked into a meeting room.

We dwell on this to explain how each of us handles sin, stress, failures, tricky confrontations, and yes, thinking about offences and hurts we have experienced. We react from the sum total of earlier experiences. We very often don't stop to think, or even put the process into thoughts. It just happens.

Here's an example. Let's say when you were 13 you had your first crush on a boy who ended up making fun of your freckles in front of everyone in your class. You ran out of the room crying. Then, when you were 23, your boss made fun of your freckles in front of all your co-workers. You died a thousand deaths of embarrassment. So, now, years later, someone innocently tells you how adorable your freckles are. You immediately lash out at them in anger. Why would you do that? You have no idea. But here's the rub: every reaction, memory, and thought accumulates and works together to create our personality and develop our patterns of dealing with things. These are neuro-chemical patterns, deeply ingrained and they don't go away just because we were baptized. They are layered deep inside of the brain.

We can know that our reaction is inappropriate to our current situation, but adding an understanding of this cumulative, biochemical effect can go a long way towards helping us re-train, renew, and change our minds. Conversely, when we have been privileged to learn obedience to our Creator in our youth, we may have fewer "biochemical effects" busy creating inappropriate responses as we age.

All in all, this is a wonderful thing. It is why we can ride a bike many years after not doing it, without even thinking. The neural pathways for steering and pedaling while keeping our balance are right there with us. In that case, the neural pathways work for our benefit. When we are working on a forgiveness situation, praying fervently, trying to release rage and resentment, then lapsing and lashing out, or crying inexplicably, or waking up in the night with vengeful thoughts, our neural pathways are working against us, even though they're just doing the job they were "taught" to do. We wonder how to stop it. We might think only angels and saints must be able to cut through this evil, when the truth is, it's the human mind at work. We all are being taught the need to change our minds!

So, how is this done? God has actually built within us the ability to renew our minds. Brain cells do not touch. There are gaps between them. In the gap is a jelly-like substance called acetylcholine. Acetylcholine encourages cells to communicate

to each other across the gap. Acetylcholine has another function: it has a memory and it locks in patterns. It doesn't have a conscience. Whatever patterns we exercise the cells in, acetylcholine remembers them as if they are etched in our brains.

Behavior modification

For example, it's a neurochemical fact that someone can push our buttons: they can touch on a topic that has lots of "history" with us, that is, "patterns" established in our brain. We may cuss at them as an automatic response, without apparently thinking, a pattern that we have from the past as well. In addition, our pattern to justify our cussing at them is also embedded too. It's all subconscious, supersonically happening at 1,250 words per minute.

What can we do? These are some solutions people have shared:

- 1) "You can strive to obey blindly. Just do the unnatural thing since the 'flesh' is so engrained to tell us the opposite."
- 2) "Read the Word of God, know God better, and know yourself better. Sometimes knowing yourself better is to realize the speed of these neural pathways and use the old 'count to 10' to give your true intentions a chance to catch up with your natural inclinations."
- 3) "Build new patterns, hopefully stronger ones to thwart the old ones."

Actually all three of these ideas are "behavior modification" techniques and have been successfully used in programs for stopping smoking, overeating, etc.

Let's glance back at Rom 12:2 and the concept of putting off and on. Our Heavenly Father has given us a means to accomplish this. It is a chemical in the brain called Gamma-Aminobutyric acid (GABA). Basically, GABA: (1) counteracts acetylcholine and (2) sets up a detour to encourage a new path, though not instantly.

The actions of GABA are exciting in their importance. We are *not* doomed to constantly repeat patterns that inhibit our forgiving others, patterns of carrying grudges, or feeling hopeless to change! The ability to counteract these things and put off and then put on is built into the brains created for us. However, the function of GABA is not one of changing things immediately. In fact, it takes tedious work for the brain to build a new pathway for us. The blessing is that our minds are renewable! That which prevents growth and the healing of forgiveness can be purged. The chemicals are all in place to accomplish the task.

Here's an example of how such a process can work. There was a counselor who was teaching a man about this feature of the brain. The man came to him with a severe lust problem for women he would see on the street. He had recently become a Christian and discovered this habit was not going to go away just because of his new-found faith, as he had hoped. So, the counselor came up with this plan: the next time he saw a woman that he would normally lust after, he was to:

- 1) Look up to the sky (heaven).
- 2) Say almost audibly "O God, look what I am thinking, forgive me".
- 3) Bless her.
- 4) And look at his watch.

You can imagine the challenge to really doing this. But he was determined to overcome years of habit; to re-route the etchings of acetylcholine in his brain.

It worked! Eventually the God-given GABA took over, eroded the old pathway and let him replace it with the agreed upon alternative. Interestingly enough, years later when the former habit was long gone, whenever the man would see a pretty woman on the street he would instinctively look at his watch.

Cognitive therapy

This is the beginning of cognitive therapy. The world has learned that what the Bible has told us all along will help people change their thinking. Using the architecture of our minds to heal our unforgiving hearts is available and God-given.

To wrap this article up, here are some steps that lay out the use of cognitive therapy in the area of forgiveness:

- 1) It begins with **BROKENNESS!** (See Psa 34:18; 51:17; 147:3; Isa 57:15; 66:2.) This puts us in an inquiring mindset. We realize we cannot trust that we will find truth in how we naturally behave. Brokenness gives us a peek at the years and layers of developing neural pathways that are harmful to our faith, our family and friends, and ourselves.
- 2) Then comes **CONFESSION.** (See Psa 32:5; Prov 28:13; James 5:16; 1John 1:9.) This puts it on the table that the thinking we have etched in our minds has got to go. The prayers here are prayers of helplessness but knowing that God is greater than our weaknesses
- 3) Next, **REPENTANCE.** (See Luke 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; Rom 2:4; 2Cor 7:8-10.) This is the “breathe out” and “sigh” (article #2) that gives us the will to change and the “turning back” and “thinking differently” that doesn’t magically change everything, but is the start back.
- 4) Thinking differently doesn’t make it so, at least not right away. This is a time of patience, of tedious re-training the patterns of our life. A time to repeatedly and with practice, **STOP THE PATHWAYS** even when they are so natural and “feel right”. We **DO THE RIGHT THING** anyway, trusting and praying to God that He will see us through it.

We can rest assured that over time, He will transform our minds:

“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33).

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek 36:26-27).

The next article will present 24 activities designed to be practiced in the re-training and renewing of our minds. Such activities can release us from the bondage of an unforgiving heart, by God’s grace.

David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Focusing on the Kingdom of God Everyday

Thinking about the Kingdom on a daily basis is something that I really struggle with. I pray and talk to God frequently and do my daily readings, but if my faith is in a great hope that is coming shouldn't I put more of a focus on thinking daily about what the Kingdom will be like? Everyone needs to have their own Kingdom vision. *"Where there is no vision the people perish"* (Prov 29:18). Each vision will be unique for each individual; there are some who are looking forward to being reunited with loved ones who have fallen asleep, or those who look forward to receiving a new body that will be raised imperishable. Yet our common uniting focus should be how Christ will be the King of the world and sin will be no longer. The ultimate promise of God being all in all will be finally fulfilled.

Paul desperately tries to convey with all his might to the Corinthians that if Christ was not raised then our hope is worthless and a lie. His tone and fervency confirm his enthusiasm for the future resurrection. *"If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized?"* (1Cor 15:29). The entire ethos of Paul's speech is that our hope is a certainty and we need to constantly remind ourselves of the need to *"press towards the mark of the high calling in Christ our Lord"* (Phil 3:14). The time and energy that goes into the menial things of this life should not come in between or outweigh our priority of focusing on the Kingdom. When things in life go contrary to what we had hoped (which they often do), we can stand still and think about the comfort of our faith. This indeed is a real, sure, and true realization that Christ is coming back to establish His Kingdom, and it is the gift and pleasure of God to give it to us.

Rather than getting frustrated and dwelling on the present troubles that the world presents, I try to think of how the world will be transformed, rejuvenated, and reformed at the coming of Christ. No longer will pollution and grey skies be seen all around us; they will be replaced by a new world that will be so glorious we won't even remember the old one. *"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind"* (Isa 65:17). Themes of coming towards God's light are prevalent throughout Scripture. My mood is significantly changed by the simple addition of natural sunshine in my day. Isaiah tells us that *"the sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory"* (Isa 60:19). What a comfort to think that I won't have to rely on the sun to brighten my mood because the Lord will be my everlasting light!

We are given ample Scriptural examples of how we must conduct ourselves in order to train ourselves for the Kingdom. Psa 146 is an excellent picture of how trust in princes is fleeting, and in them there is no salvation. This psalm shows us the things that God does: executing justice for the oppressed, giving food to the hungry, setting the prisoners free, protecting strangers, supporting the fatherless and widows. In the Kingdom, this work — God's work — will be our work as well. Are we preparing ourselves for that work now by doing what we can to bring comfort to the suffering, and security to the marginalized? When we engaged in this work — God's work — we do not only have an impact on those that we serve

directly: Jesus reminds us that *“even as you did to the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me”* (Matt 25:40). Are our actions helping us or hindering us from coming closer to the kingdom of God? When deciding on our mode of actions we should be thinking of the consequences, and whether or not they have a positive effect on molding our character to become more like Christ. The lives we are living now are merely a training ground for the lives that we will live when Christ returns. When training for a marathon, one does a lot of running as preparation for the event. It wouldn’t make sense to dedicate all your training time to building upper body strength if the event that you are competing in requires you to rely on your legs. Likewise, if we are training for an immortal life of service and glorifying God, it is by doing those very things that we can best prepare ourselves.

One of the simplest ways I have found to be helpful in reminding myself of the impending reality of the Kingdom of God is by saying it out loud. I thank Bro. Bob Lloyd for getting me to talk to myself: “I want to be in the Kingdom of God more than anything else in the world!” Hearing those few words out loud makes me realise that the Kingdom is coming, and it is real, and I want to be there. This concept is also present in the way that Jesus taught his disciples to pray: *“thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and glory forever”* (Matt 6:10,13). That should be at the forefront of every prayer we give. The crux of our faith is the future, and how we act now affects us in the long term. I take refuge in knowing that my God made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them will keep His promise of sending His son to become the king of the world.

Another thing to think of is how we will be taken to the Kingdom. An angel who will look like any normal human will say “it is time, come follow me and I will show you to Christ”. Have we gone over what that moment will be like in our minds? Will our response be “yes, here I am ready and willing” or “just a second let me get my things in order, I’m not quite ready”? Matt 24:31 tells us *“and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”*. Visualizing this event in our minds will prepare us for when the actual event takes place. The band Mercy Me sums up the potential first impression we could have while meeting Christ in their song ‘I Can Only Imagine’. “Will I stand in your presence?/to my knees will I fall?/will I sing hallelujah?/will I be able to speak at all?” If we merely have a vague and cloudy idea of what meeting Christ will be like, it won’t do anything to make our vision a sure affirmation. It is a valuable exercise to really meditate upon Jesus’ coming return. Imagine what your first words will be like when the trumpet blows and the angel is there to guide you to Zion.

Little things will help us to fully realize what lies before us and help us on our walk towards the Kingdom. It is God’s gift and His pleasure to give us the Kingdom of Heaven. *“Surely I am coming soon,”* (Rev 22:20), as Jesus assures us. So as I go about my day I try to think about the Kingdom and what it means to take on the saving name of Jesus Christ. Each day we grow and can further improve ourselves in preparation for that coming day. Even so come Lord Jesus.

Kelty Campbell (Toronto West, ON)

Bro. Wilfred Lambert

(I knew Bro. Wilfred from long ago when I studied in Birmingham, and have met him occasionally since. His overwhelming knowledge of Hebrew and his deep appreciation for the Word left a deep impression. And which other Christadelphian has had his death recorded by a major obituary in the *London Times*? — The Editor).



Wilfred Lambert, a lifelong Christadelphian and internationally respected Assyriologist, was famed for his unrivaled mastery of the cuneiform literatures.

As Professor of Assyriology at Birmingham University, England, he was the consummate scholar of Ancient Near East languages and cultures, especially ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform. Over a long lifetime as an academic and writer, he left a rich heritage of monumental contributions in many aspects of his chosen field.

His pioneering studies in these ancient languages encouraged and supported modern Old Testament scholars in understanding more fully the texts with which they worked, and undoubtedly helped to improve their translations considerably.

Christadelphian roots

Wilfred George Lambert lived in Birmingham, England, for most of his life. He was born in 1926 into a Christadelphian family, was baptized at Birmingham Central Christadelphian Ecclesia, and retained a strong Christadelphian faith all his life. He later wrote that he had gained much early intellectual stimulation from reading his Bible at home and in the local Christadelphian Sunday school where he had outstanding teachers.

In later years he confided that he knew exactly what had drawn him into Assyriology. His parents had taken him as a boy to hear Sir Leonard Woolley lecture in Birmingham on the excavations at Ur of the Chaldees. The young boy was captivated, and his life's work unfolded before him.

Education and professional work

Wilfred attended Cambridge University, earning two degrees: Classics in 1943-1945, and Oriental languages — Hebrew and Aramaic, Rabbinic Hebrew, and Akkadian (ancient Babylonian and Assyrian) — in 1948-1950.

The interval in his university studies, between 1945 and 1948, was spent in national service at a horticultural nursery near Birmingham. In lieu of military service, he supervised prisoners of war who worked there. Graduating from Cambridge University in 1950, he spent the next four years teaching the classics. During this time he perfected his knowledge of Akkadian and Sumerian, reading and copying cuneiform inscriptions in the British Museum whenever he could.

He made extraordinary progress as a scholar and was appointed lecturer in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Toronto, from 1955 to 1959,

and then associate professor (and chairman) of the Oriental Seminary, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, from 1959 to 1964. Wherever he relocated, Bro. Lambert always transferred his membership to a local Christadelphian ecclesia, so he could be involved there.

During these years he completed what was to be his most important published work, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (1960, and reprinted). This milestone in Assyriological studies encompassed all that was characteristic in his work: extraordinary facility with cuneiform script, great command of Babylonian grammar and syntax, and wonderful insight for extracting meaning from fragments of the world's most ancient literature. At the time the great modern dictionaries of Akkadian were in their infancy, and his translation of the most difficult literary compositions involved groundbreaking research. His work established new readings and meanings that were soon taken for granted.

Prof. Lambert's standard publications, insights, and references fill practically every page of the 21-volume *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, begun in 1921 and completed 90 years later. Less apparent is what lay behind that work. During those decades he corrected draft pages of his colleagues' and students' work with notes in red such as "No! Please see me later!" His comments on others' work, even when critical, were always invitations; in effect, 'Let me show you what you missed.'

In 1969 he published, with A.R. Millard, *Atra-hasis: the Babylonian Story of the Flood*. This became a second classic which presented his work in an accessible and reliable form to non-Assyriologists, a readership he acknowledged in all his writings.

These works were followed by numerous articles and reviews. Bro. Wilfred wrote importantly on a wide spectrum of textual matters, spanning the languages and the three millennia of sources with tireless application and understanding. As with the dictionary, his knowledge laid the foundation for many publications by other authors, and his selfless correction of others' work filled train journeys and leisure time throughout his life.

An extraordinary discovery

Bro. Lambert's ability as a cuneiformist was, quite simply, unchallenged. The British Museum regularly turned to him for help with cataloguing clay tablets. His knowledge of the entire span of cuneiform literature often enabled him to identify the smallest fragment. His record of 'joins', that is, identifying fragments which belonged together — like ancient jigsaw puzzles — was without equal.

In recent years he worked with the British Museum on its Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals Project. Among other matters, he helped the museum shed light on the origins of the famous Cyrus Cylinder, which is often described as containing the world's first 'Declaration of Human Rights.' Among other matters, and according to some interpretations, the Cyrus Cylinder authorized the return of deported peoples to their homelands and implied that there should be freedom of religious expression throughout the empire.

This inscribed clay cylinder, broken into several fragments, had been discovered in an 1879 excavation in ancient Babylon, in what is now modern Iraq. The declaration was in Akkadian cuneiform script in the name of Cyrus the Great after his conquest of Babylon in 539 BC.

In 2009 Bro. Lambert examined two small clay fragments of another, apparently unrelated, cuneiform tablet from a second site near Babylon, which had been in the museum's collection since 1881. For over 120 years the significance of these fragments was not recognized; they had been thought simply to be part of a building inscription. However, Bro. Lambert — working with Irving Finkel of the British Museum's Middle East department — established that the pieces came from a tablet that had been inscribed with exactly the same text as the Cyrus Cylinder.

This remarkable discovery lends fresh support to suggestions that the “declaration” was probably an imperial decree that was distributed around Cyrus's empire, and which the author of the Book of Ezra may have consulted when writing about the king (Ezra 1:1-4; cf 2Chron 36:23).

Professor and teacher

During his lifetime, Bro. Wilfred undoubtedly read more cuneiform tablets than any other person since the script was deciphered. The ancient scribal mind was familiar to him. His students say that to read any text alongside him was simply inspiring. In 1964 he was appointed lecturer at the University of Birmingham, and during the many years before his retirement in 1993 he was promoted to senior lecturer and eventually Professor of Assyriology. In his inaugural lecture, “Cuneiform Scholars Ancient and Modern”, he enlarged with memorable humor on perhaps his two favorite subjects at once. After 1993 he was Emeritus Professor but continued to teach until very recently.

Bro. Lambert was a model of clarity as teacher and lecturer, well aware of the importance of elocution for non-English listeners, and his style of delivery at many conferences and gatherings was quite effective. As a speaker, he never put people to sleep. He also lectured, taught classes, and wrote materials on Bible subjects for Christadelphian audiences in and around Birmingham, particularly on subjects involving his academic specialties.

Honors followed as his publications circulated and his reputation grew. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1971. From 1977 to 1978 he was visiting instructor at the University of Paris, and in 1978 he was made Honorary Professor of that university. He was president of the Society of Old Testament Studies in 1984. For many years he had worked on major volumes on the Babylonian creation story and on the ancient lists of Sumerian and Babylonian gods. It is expected that both these works will be published in the near future. The whole of his working life was devoted to cuneiform studies and the world of antiquity, to an extent that is rarely possible in the modern world. He gave generously of his time and expertise to fellow Old Testament students, and was always happy to identify objects and inscriptions for collectors and private enthusiasts.

He never married, and certainly indicated that austere scholarly pursuits were the course to which any young Assyriologist should commit himself. While maintaining an impersonal detachment from students and colleagues, he inspired respect and affection in his disciples. In 2000 students and close colleagues collaborated on *Wisdom, Gods and Literature*, a volume of papers in his honor. The three subjects in the title were carefully chosen and arranged in order so as to coincide with his initials, W.G.L.

A brother in Christ

Despite his scholarly detachment, Bro. Wilfred was a lively storyteller and an enjoyable conversationalist. He always had something interesting to contribute, whatever the topic, in a unique and instructive way. He was an excellent pianist and organist, well able to accompany a “Messiah” performance. He played his piano for relaxation to the exclusion of most other domestic comforts. For many years, he was permanent organist at the Birmingham Central Ecclesia.

In addition, Bro. Wilfred was for some time the Chairman of the Arranging Brothers in Birmingham Central. The last recording brother of Birmingham Central (which closed in 2008) writes: “His insights as a speaker were memorable, his clarity of thought and exposition being underpinned by a wealth of information relating to Biblical content that he had accumulated during his lifetime. His capabilities, clear thinking, and seemingly unerring insight for what is right and just will be sadly missed.”

The recording brother of Birmingham West Ecclesia, where Bro. Lambert was a member in his last years, writes: “Although he favored reform of some aspects of our community, our brother remained a faithful member of it for nearly 70 years. A week before he fell asleep in Christ, aware that his life was drawing to a close, he said, ‘I look forward to seeing you before long.’ ”

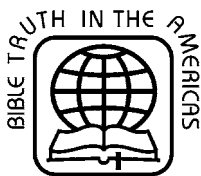
Bro. Wilfred was predeceased by his older sister Muriel and otherwise had no close natural family to mourn him. He is deeply lamented by his fellow Christadelphians in Birmingham. For the world’s Assyriologists, and his own circle of students, his loss is irreparable.

Professor Wilfred G. Lambert, Assyriologist and our brother in Christ, was born on February 26, 1926. He died on November 9, 2011, aged 85. His funeral took place in the West Birmingham Christadelphian Hall.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Note: The above is excerpted from obituaries in several English newspapers, the Wikipedia article on Wilfred Lambert, and news from English Christadelphian ecclesias. It was delayed in appearing in *The Tidings* due to pressure on space.

“The last and highest result of prayer is not the securing of this or that gift, the avoiding of this or that danger. The last and highest result of prayer is the knowledge of God and, by that knowledge, the transformation of human character and of the world” (George John Blewett).



Bible Mission News

Baptism in Costa Rica



Baptism of Bro. Geofredy Gonzalez Araya by Brethren Ronald Santamaria Barrantes and Wilberth Herrera Arroyo.

Bro. Douglas, the Recording Brother from Santa Barbara, Costa Rica wrote to share good news from their ecclesia. Bro. Geofredy González Araya, 44, was baptized on March 25, 2012, after studying the Bible patiently for more than a year. His wife, Sis. Evelyn Vargas Salazar, was baptized nine years ago and they have a nine year-old daughter, Daniela. Sis. Evelyn is the daughter of Sis. Hortensia Salazar and cousin of Sis. Marisol Araya Salazar.

Bro. Geofredy works in the area of telecommunications with the Costa Rican power company ICE and we have confidence that he will be an effective worker in the ecclesia as well.

The baptism was carried out in a small river near Santa Bárbara; we thank God that in this part of the world there are still rivers pure enough to be used for this purpose. In effect, we held a fraternal day for the whole ecclesia, with visiting brethren from the city of Grecia in the province of Alajuela as well as a Canadian family, Bro. Duncan and Sis. Gillian Kenzie and their daughter Lydia. We all shared in the fellowship of a delicious lunch prepared by the sisters of the ecclesia. As can be seen, by the mercy of God the ecclesia continues to soldier on.



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

**Bro. Duncan, Bro. Geofredy, Sis. Evelyn,
Sis. Gillian and Lydia**

Good News from Jamaica — May 2012

Bro. Don Luff shares his experiences from his trip in May to Jamaica:

Last year, the CBMJ started scheduling Mutual Improvement (MI) Days again in the Annual Calendar of Events for the Jamaican ecclesias. On May 12, 2012, another MI Day was held at the May Pen Ecclesial Hall. It started at about 11 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. Approximately 40 brothers and sisters of all ages were in attendance, from a number of ecclesias across the Island.



Most of those attending the MI Day in front of the May Pen Hall

There was a common chairman for the day, while individual ecclesias were responsible for 20 minute mini-meeting segments — each with a presider, hymn, reading and a 10 minute talk. Each segment was followed by constructive comments for improvement or commendation for a job well-done. In the April issue of this magazine, we reported that the Port Maria Ecclesia had not been able to meet regularly for various reasons. We are happy to report that this ecclesia took care of the first segment during the MI Day. Bro. Jason Henry presided and Bro. Harold Campbell presented an excellent 10 minute talk on “Tribulation” — something the ecclesia had indeed experienced! Interspersed between the segments, there were also selected readings from a previously prepared mini-binder (duotang) of notes — guidelines on mutual improvement classes, suggestions regarding presiding, tips on good public Bible reading and specifics on the purpose of an exhortation. Bro. Harry Tennant’s book entitled “Ye Servants of the Lord” was one of the resources that was made available. About 20 copies were obtained from Christadelphian used book sources in the Brotherhood. A display table was also set out with samples of 12 different books and booklets such as — Women of the Bible, Principles and Proverbs, 66 Books of the Bible, Notes on the Apocalypse and The Christadelphian Instructor. There was a sign-up sheet for each sample for those who wanted copies — this became a busy place as the day went by! It was

generally felt to be a profitable day, and that more would be beneficial — several times a year.



Our two new sisters, Sis. Doreen Richards on the left and Sis. Sherine Torres on the right. They were two very happy women!

The next day, Sunday May 13th, was a spiritual blessing for the Jamaican ecclesias. Members of the Spanish Town Ecclesia joined the May Pen Ecclesia for a double baptism. Two women who had been preparing for some time — Doreen Richards and Sherine Torres were baptized in the Salt River. (Sis. Doreen is one of four generations of the same family attending May Pen. Her mother is Sis. Rebecca Smikle, and her daughter is baptized and her granddaughter attends Sunday School.) At 8:30 a.m. — members, youths and children boarded a minibus and several cars to travel 45 minutes to witness their confession of faith and baptisms. We returned to the May Pen Hall for the extending of the right hand of fellowship and Remembrance Service — about 50 were in attendances — members, family and friends. This was followed by refreshments and a special activity for all the mothers — about 18. Cards were presented to mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers — along with comments and big hugs from family members. It was an enjoyable day and a boost for the ecclesia.

During the course of the two days of activities, we were pleased at the spiritual decorum and propriety that was followed by those organizing the activities. On Sunday — full-length baptismal gowns were used, Romans chapter 6 was read and there was a prayer prior to the baptisms — and a number of hymns were sung after the baptisms. It was a full baptismal service right by the edge of the river, with by-standers looking on quietly — a good witness. I was to exhort later, but during the baptisms by the river, I did not wear a tie. After returning to the recording brother's home, on the way to the May Pen Hall for the Remembrance Service — he told me that I needed to wear a tie in order to exhort at May Pen! I had a tie in my book bag and always wear one. The little brotherly nudge made me feel good!

We really enjoyed the hospitality of members in their homes, as well as another Breaking of Bread Service on Tuesday, May 15th, with some members of the Port Maria Ecclesia. We met with four members of this ecclesia for about five hours — we enjoyed fellowship through the daily Bible readings, an exhortation on the theme of “This do in remembrance of me”, the emblems and a meal together. We gave Bro. Harold Campbell a second edition copy of “Further Seasons of Comfort” by Bro. Robert Roberts — he looked at it and said “This is a book that has been published with care!” Years ago he worked in bindery — the book's spine was showing its age and he said he would put some binding tape on it. He likes to read and will use the exhortations in this book as a basis for his Sunday morning

thoughts. We plan on sending him more books on the Truth. It was a good week in Jamaica!

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

The Truth in Barbados

In July 1892, Bro. Blenman was able to report in the *Christadelphian Magazine*: “I am pleased to announce that an ecclesia has been formed on the Island of Barbados, my native land.” During the previous year, about nine or ten immersions had taken place, mainly through the zealous efforts of Bro. James Hepburn, a Scot by birth, who had arrived in Barbados.”



From that time the Truth has been preached to many and maintained by faithful brethren and sisters up to the present. Sis. Murl Marshall (shown here with Sisters Linda Ghent and Janet Darley during their November 2011 visit), one of those faithful ones, was baptized at Huddersfield ecclesia in 1961. During her time in the U.K.

Sis. Murl was actively involved in Sunday School work until she returned home to Barbados in 1973. Her love of teaching children has continued in Barbados as Sis. Murl travelled near and far throughout the island to collect children for Sunday School and teach them saving principles of the Truth in her forthright and bubbling way.

Many of Murl's students have been baptized into Christ over the years. Bro. Joel and Sis. Heather Caine, shown here with their granddaughter, have been long time ecclesial stalwarts. Sis. Heather was taught the truth by our beloved Sis. Murl.



An ecclesial lunch during our visit was catered by our Sisters including Judy Rose and Amina Ramlochan. We enjoyed a feast of macaroni pie, breadfruit and chicken in our fellowship meal together.

The following appeared in the *Christadelphian* in 1973: “We were pleased to welcome Bro. and Sis. Prewer from Tobago last month whom we thank for his exhortation on April 15 and for the evening address at our special



dedication meeting on moving into our new hall. Over 70 people attended this meeting of which about 45 were visitors.” Plans are in place for a special 40th anniversary celebration of the hall opening next April, God willing.

The meeting place, as seen, is home to many

ecclesial activities. During our visit visitors and brethren and sisters attended a campaign lecture on the Trinity, Studies on Ezekiel’s temple, a regular CYC class for our young people and an ecclesial luncheon.



Our CYC students enjoyed portraying features of the Life of Joseph. They focused on the need to be separate from the world as did Joseph during his life of suffering and trial in Egypt.

Home study classes, like this one at the home of Bro. John and Sis. Christina Bancroft are always part of a visit to Barbados.

During the Easter holidays, there is the annual Barbados Bible School. Bro. Dev Ramcharan from Canada led the school this year to encourage the ecclesia.



‘Bajans’ love their Bibles. Typically, every verse a Christadelphian begins quoting to a friend is finished by the friend. Churches of many denominations around the island are filled on Wednesday and Sundays. Often a grocery store clerk is sitting reading her Bible while awaiting the next customer.

Because of this interest in the Bible, leafleting and preaching in various centers including the Nelson Square in Bridgetown is a great pleasure. Many friends there were introduced to the www.thisisyourbible.com correspondence course. There are over 600 contacts in Barbados. Most are happy with their Church but want to learn more about the Word. Our continual prayer is that some will be moved by hearing the Word and seek out the Truth of Scripture to the Glory of God in heaven.

We ask that you keep our beloved brethren in your prayers as they contend earnestly for the Truth once delivered to the saints. Since 1892, the light stand has been burning brightly in Barbados. We pray that will continue until our Lord's long desired return.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA.CMBC Publicity*

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. \$10.00 US (372 pages, 2010)

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)

How to Order

Online — www.tidings.org (Go to Books). E-mail — books@tidings.org. Mail — Tidings Books, 11659 Caves Road, Chesterland, OH 44026. Shipping & handling costs extra. Make checks payable to *The Christadelphian Tidings*.

News & Notices

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

BARRIE, ON

Since our last correspondence, the Barrie Ecclesia rejoiced with our Bro. Tom Woegerer on the occasion of the baptism of his wife, WENDY WOEGERER on January 2, 2011. May God bless her on her walk toward the kingdom.

We also rejoice with our Bro. Tom and Sis. Wendy in the birth of their first child, Tobias, born February 17, 2012. We pray God will bless their new family.

We have received by transfer Sis. Ona Lawton from the Brantford, ON Ecclesia, and Sis. Margo Maier from the Niagara, ON Ecclesia. Bro. Tim Conrod has been transferred to the North Bay, ON Ecclesia where we pray he will be strengthened by his brothers and sisters there.

God willing, the Barrie Ecclesia will hold its Fall study day on Saturday, October 20, 2012. The theme for the day is, "Modern Challenges for 21st Century Disciples". Subtitles will be "In the world", "In the State", and "In the Ecclesia". For information contact Bro. Bruce Abelby by phone 519-925-5297 or email bnb69abel@hotmail.com.

Grant Abel

BEDFORD, NS

We are pleased to welcome as members of our ecclesia Bro. John and Sis. Sair Ching. Bro. John has been living in the area for several years and has been a regular attendee for some time now. After her immigration paperwork was finalised, Sis. Sair has joined us from the Newquay Ecclesia in England. John and Sair were united in marriage last year here in Halifax, NS. We look forward to serving with them as we await our Lord's return. Their transfer brings our membership to 19.

Since our last communication, we were pleased to welcome visiting brothers and sisters from various places, including: Paul and Marie Baines and family (Sussex, NB); and Joan Bennett (Victoria, BC).

Our annual study day will be held, Lord willing, on September 15, 2012. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the theme, "Galatians". All are most welcome. Please contact Julia Snobelen by email thesnobelens@hotmail.com.

Steve Snobelen

BRANTFORD, ON

We are happy to report that after a satisfactory interview the ecclesia has welcomed Sis. Judy Barclay back into fellowship. We pray the Father will continue to be with our Sis. Judy and husband, Phil, as we prepare for the coming of our Lord.

Our Camp Kumah Senior CYC weekend for ages 13 and up will be held in Brantford from August 31-September 2, 2012, with Bro. Darryl Rose (Toronto West, ON) leading studies on the theme, "The Glory of God." Cost for the weekend is \$20. If financial assistance is required, please let us know. For more information and registration forms please contact Bro. David Billington by email dave@visualhabitat.com.

Please note that our Sunday meeting times will follow our summer schedule for the months of July and August with memorial meeting at 10:00 am.

Daniel Billington

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We are pleased to report that on April 29, 2012, ELLEN DAY, the wife of our Bro. Mike Day, was baptized into Christ. We are continually thankful to our heavenly Father for bringing yet another into His covenant and adding to our numbers here at Echo Lake. We pray that Sis. Ellen will be happy amongst us as we travel the road together and await the coming of our king.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, and David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Dave and Louise Birchall (London, ON); Joel and Amy Robinson (Hamilton Book Road, ON); and Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY).

Stewart Marsden

GRANITE STATE, NH

With heavy hearts we announce the falling asleep in Christ of our dear Bro. Gil Riley early on the morning of May 11, 2011. It is difficult to convey in words the depth of the love that Bro. Gil had for the truth or how he inspired the lives of so many brothers and sisters over the years. He spent years preaching and teaching with an enthusiasm and devotion that is seldom witnessed. Bro. Gil was baptized at the Cranston, RI Ecclesia on June 24, 1961, and for all of these years he was constant in his service to the Lord, especially in the New England area. He was a founding member of two ecclesias in New England, the Westerly, RI Ecclesia and the Merrimack, NH Ecclesia, now known as the Granite State, NH Ecclesia. He was very active in his ecclesia as well as in the greater Christadelphian community. He served on several committees. One of his favorites was the New England Advancement of Scriptural Knowledge committee, as the work of spreading the Gospel was ever near and dear to his heart.

The home of Bro. Gil and his sister-wife, Lois, was always a true haven of spiritual comfort, not only for those who lived in the ecclesias that Bro. Gil and Sis. Lois were members of, but also for travelers from all over the world. Many late evenings and early mornings were spent in quiet conversation around the dining room table sharing in the deep things of the word with brothers and sisters from Australia, the UK, Canada and many other places. Bro. Gil's faith was always rock solid and he so loved to talk about the covenants of God, the hope of Israel, and the coming kingdom on earth. Though we are truly saddened because we miss our dear brother, we know that his sleep in the Lord will be short as Christ is at the door. How incredibly thrilled he will be to finally see his Lord and Master and how excited he will be to meet Abraham, for Bro. Gil spoke so often about Abraham and the promises with the kind of passion that only true faith can inspire.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thess. 4:16).

However, not all of our news is sad. We are very happy to announce the recent baptism

of another of our Sunday school students. CASSIE CONOVER, the eldest daughter of Bro. Dave and Sis. Kim Conover, put on the saving Name of our Lord Jesus Christ on Saturday, May 26, 2012. How uplifting it is for us to witness yet another of Adam's race give herself to the service of Yahweh in the hope of the coming Age! May the Lord bless her in her new life. May He always guide her steps on the path that will lead her, by His grace, into the kingdom!

Steve Smith

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

It is with sadness that we report the falling asleep in the Lord of our Bro. Dennis Hominuck. Bro. Dennis will be missed by all of us here at Greenaway and our thoughts are with his family in this time of loss. We rejoice that he died in the hope of the resurrection.

Tom Thorp

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. Dave and Sis. Connie Stiles visited our meeting on May 27, 2012, from the Meriden, CT, Ecclesia and Bro. Dave gave us an excellent exhortation and Bible study. Bro. Steve and Sis. Chris Cheetham visited our meeting from the Moorestown, NJ, ecclesia on June 3, 2012, and Bro. Steve gave us an excellent exhortation followed by a great luncheon put on by our chief sisters. Denise and Mike Kowal, and their children, Rachel and Ryan, also visited us.

We sent more plastic bread tabs to Sis. Marie Washington at the Echo Lake, NJ Ecclesia to be used for wheelchairs for the needy in South Africa.

Stephen J. DeMarco

PITTSBURGH, PA

We are pleased to announce the baptism of ELIZABETH TELLES, daughter of Sis. Jennifer Bekhit and Bro. Fred Telles, and granddaughter of Bro. Bob and Sis. Mary Jane Pommer on April 15, 2012. May the Lord guide her as she journeys to the kingdom with us.

We enjoyed visits from the following brothers and sisters: Richard and Esther Morgan and family (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Sarah Telles (Cranston, RI); Roger and Joy Snyder, and Everett and Amanda Muniz and family (Paris Avenue, OH); Kevin and Melinda Flatley (Columbus, OH); and Steven and Kristen Hemingray (Seattle, WA).

Bro. Bill Link's classes on Zechariah for our May 5-6, 2012, weekend were very much appreciated. We were blessed with the attendance of many brothers and sisters from Paris Avenue, OH, Hamilton Book Road, ON and Toronto East, ON. We thank Bre. Link and Flatley for their encouraging words of exhortation.

Len Budney

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias. In addition, we welcomed the following brothers and sisters from afar: Henry and Sharon Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Jack and Shirley Robinson (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); Jim Vetkos (Grants Pass, OR); Coleen Uiga (Norfolk, VA); Tim and Sarah Osborn (Okanagan, BC); Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON); and Belinda Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI).

Our thanks go out to Bro. Tony Fratello (Reseda, CA) for his exhortation and afternoon class and to Bre. Henry Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR) and Jim Glover of (Reseda, CA) for their exhortations. We also thank our Bro. Tim Osborn for leading our study weekend and “Day with the Word” on the subject of, “The Jubilee”. We also held a special weekend series on, “Family Life in the Lord,” designed to strengthen our ecclesia and Bro. Frank Abel graciously came and led us in these studies. 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 very pleased to note that we had an addition to our ecclesial family with the baptism into Christ of REBECCA DECAUSSIN on December 9, 2011. Sis. Rebecca is the daughter of our Bro. Rodney deCaussin (Simi Hills, CA) and we look forward to the strength we can derive from her as we journey together to the kingdom of God.

We also had two additions to our natural ecclesial family as our Bro. James and Sis. Kristen Styles became parents of Naomi Kay on Feb. 24, 2012, and Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Katie Glover welcomed Joseph Cameron into their family on April 12, 2012. Our future Sunday school population continues to grow and we are quite thrilled to have these little ones in our midst.

Tom Graham

MIDWEST CHRISTADELPHIAN YOUNG COUPLES WEEKEND

God willing, on October 5-7, 2012, there will be a young couples weekend held with the intent of helping young couples find balance between family, ecclesia, work, etc., with additional focus on raising a Godly family, and relationships with extended family. To help couples get the most out of the weekend and prepare for group discussions, we’ve provided a short workbook which is available on the website.

The cost of the weekend will be \$390.00 f(US) per couple. A \$150 deposit per couple is required when registering. A discounted rate is available for those wishing to arrive a day early or stay a day longer. Activities available are: bike rental, basketball, hiking, tennis, driving range board games and much more!

For questions and registration please call Sis. Annalee Cooper at: 330-904-3938 or go to registration@mcycw.com.

Annalee Cooper

THE HALIFAX PROJECT

It has been some time since we provided our last update on the efforts of the Halifax Project. It is the tenth anniversary of this project to create a viable, full-service ecclesia in Nova Scotia, and we thought it was time for an update. Since our last report our ecclesia has seen further growth, with two new members through relocation and one from a baptism. Our membership is now approaching twenty. We are grateful to our Heavenly Father for this growth, which has given us a much more vibrant and active light stand than when my family arrived from England in June 2001 to an ecclesia of only two active members.

Although still small compared to many ecclesias, we have a very high participation rate. For instance, we have eight brethren who carry out platform duties and five organists. In addition to the weekly breaking of bread service, we have a Sunday school and a weekly Bible class. We also run a monthly CYC and regularly hold other activities. Since 2003, we have been able to hold an annual study day in the autumn. This complements the annual Thanksgiving Fraternal and spring study days held in

Sussex, NB, which is just over three hours away by car. Our ecclesia has been able to run five Bible seminar series since 2002, along with two campaigns with help from outside the province, and has hosted Truth Corps.

We have a small number of interested friends and one baptism has come through the Bible seminars. Preaching activities are coordinated in part through Advancement of Scriptural Knowledge Atlantic, which includes the ecclesias at St John's, NF; Sussex, NB; and our own ecclesia here in Halifax, NS. Despite the blessings of growth and regular ecclesial activities, we believe our ecclesia is still not as effective as it could be. First, our preaching work would benefit from a greater number of willing hands. Second, additional members would help us to expand our activities, including those of a more social nature. Although our baptised membership ranges from teenagers to those in their seventies, along with three children, there is a special need for young families with children. We have also found that many local people here shy away from churches with small congregations. Having a larger ecclesia with more activities including, we hope, more public proclamation, would help us in our outreach efforts.

Thus, we would like to send out another appeal to brothers and sisters who might be interested in relocating to this part of the Lord's vineyard. Halifax is the largest city in Atlantic Canada, with a population of around 350,000. Halifax has a vibrant and diverse economy, thanks to Halifax being the capital of the province, home to the Atlantic Fleet of the Canadian Navy, a financial center for the Maritimes and the location of five universities, including Dalhousie, which is the largest in Canada east of Quebec. There is also a growing high-tech sector, with Research in Motion, makers of the Blackberry device, recently setting up a significant center of operations in Halifax and employing over 1000 people. The Nova Scotia government is actively seeking immigrants. Those looking for work are encouraged to contact the undersigned for more information about job prospects here. One member of our ecclesia is employed by the provincial government in trades and training and would be happy to offer expert advice on those sections of the job market that come under his purview.

Young people planning on attending university are encouraged to consider one of the universities in Halifax. Between these universities, all the major disciplines are covered, including the Arts, the Sciences, Engineering, Medicine, Dentistry and Architecture. One brother teaches at one of the universities and there are currently three baptised young people enrolled at or affiliated with Dalhousie. This, in addition to our ecclesia and its regular activities, means that a young person would not have to go it alone.

With the largest International airport in the region, Halifax is well connected, with multiple daily, direct flights to Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, as well as direct flights to several major U.S. cities, including Boston, New York City, Washington, DC and Philadelphia. A daily, direct flight flies to London, England, which is only four time zones and a 5.5-hour flight away from Halifax.

Nova Scotia is a great place to live, work, raise a family or retire. Real estate prices are still reasonable, Halifax has a state-of-the-art hospital system, people are friendly, the highways are not clogged with traffic and it is impossible to be more than a 30-minute drive from the ocean. In addition to the ubiquitous ocean, Nova Scotia has farmland, forests, rivers, lakes, rolling hills and even skiing in the winter months. Other attractions are the Bay of Fundy with its high tides, Cape Breton Island with its Scottish culture, and the nearby province of Prince Edward Island not to mention New Brunswick, which has a vibrant ecclesia in Sussex with whom we have regular fellowship.

It is common for Christadelphians to congregate in areas where there are large numbers of ecclesias, such as Southern Ontario, Birmingham, England and Sydney, Australia. Virtually all the members of the Halifax ecclesia come from large Christadelphian centers and know the attractions these centers have for ecclesial life. However, this is not always to our credit. The simple truth is that if we all lived in these large Christadelphian centers, the Gospel would not spread throughout the world. We need to look outward as well as inward. God needs willing hands outside as well as inside these Christadelphian centers. Thus, we encourage those with a pioneering spirit, or perhaps those who are interested in getting away from the stress and strain of areas with larger populations, to consider relocating to Nova Scotia to help us carry out the mandate of creating a strong light stand in this part of the world. Rest assured, your presence would be appreciated and you would be put to good use! Anyone who has thought of doing missionary work, but has hesitated due to financial reasons or the requirement to learn a new language, can come to a place like Halifax and do missionary work right in North America! To paraphrase Acts 16:9, “come over to Halifax and help us!”

We are writing this letter on the tenth anniversary of arriving here on June 22, 2001. At the time, we had two young girls and I was coming to take up a teaching job at one of the universities here. God blessed us with two more children here in Nova Scotia, and our eldest is now a sister in Christ. Ten years on we are very grateful for how much God has blessed us and we hope that our growing ecclesia will continue to serve as an effective witness in this province of almost one million, most of whom have never heard of the Christadelphians.

For more information about Halifax and Nova Scotia, including a link to a government site that allows people to do an online test to see if they would have a good chance of being accepted as an immigrant to Canada, see: <http://www.christadelphians.ns.ca/relocate/> (remove the last word to see our ecclesial website).

We would be happy to answer questions any brother or sister may have about our ecclesia, life in Nova Scotia or employment opportunities in this region. Please send messages to: snobelen@dal.ca.

Stephen and Julie Snobelen

In society today many people put great value on their possessions. Things like the right shirts, jeans or backpacks set the standard for social status in the schools. But people should respect others for their character and personality rather than for what they own. Also, some people will use others to gain a certain objective, whether it is a loan or an introduction to a friend. Unfortunately, people will always see others in a “What can you do for me?” way. Hopefully, in the future people will learn to love others for their companionship and their personality. Placing undue importance on material things weakens one’s ability to see the value of friendship. Personally I am ashamed that I place a value on my possessions. I don’t believe that I use people to gain more things. Once in a while things can be important, like your first report card or your great grandmother’s picture, but real people can always bring more to your life than an inanimate thing.

Katie Stauffer

Minute Meditation

I was wrong

John Maxwell wisely observed, “A person must be big enough to admit mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them.”

Who doesn’t make mistakes? The Apostle Paul was quoting the Psalms when he said, “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one,” which means that all of us have made mistakes. Yet there are some who will never admit to a mistake, which implies that they certainly are not smart enough to profit from it or strong enough to correct it, according to Maxwell.

We all make mistakes. Are we big enough to admit them? Unforgiven mistakes can keep us out of the Kingdom, so the price for refusing to admit to them is huge. The first thing that we need to do is recognize what we have done and confess. We certainly should confess in prayer to our Heavenly Father, as John advises us when he says: “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” John uses that big little word “if,” which means serious consequences if we do not confess. No confession means we are not forgiven, we are not cleansed from our unrighteousness, and, as well, we are not profiting from learning from our mistakes or working on correcting them.

We also need to confess our sins to others. James tells us, “Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that ye may be healed”. We are to help bear one another’s burdens, as Paul tells the Galatians, and by confessing our sins and praying for one another, we strengthen each other on the way of life.

We particularly need to confess to someone whom we have wronged. There are twelve words that can work wonders in our relationship with others as well as with our Heavenly Father. They are: “I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me. I love you.” We mentioned these words in a talk given overseas some years ago, and afterwards a sister came up with tears in her eyes and said that she had been married for 25 years and not once had her husband ever said he was wrong, or was sorry, or asked to be forgiven. Either she was married to a remarkable fellow, or he has a problem and is not big enough to admit to his mistakes. We do hope he told her during those past 25 years that he loved her.

Once we confess, the next step is to learn lessons from our mistakes so we do not keep repeating them. Merely mouthing the words, “Forgive us our trespasses” is not enough. There is a problem if we continually repeat the same mistake. However, we all have this body of death that is prone to sin, and, as Paul admitted with horror, at times the good he should do he did not do, and the evil that he did not want to do, he did. We must, from the heart, confess when there is something that we should not keep on doing, ask for God’s help in resisting, and then take appropriate action to increase our resistance. We need to think carefully about what we can do differently so that we can avoid that mistake, and we must resolve ourselves to do it.

Resisting takes strength. The third point that John Maxwell made was to be strong enough to correct our mistakes. Once we have truly asked to be forgiven we must deliberately take steps to avoid making the same mistake again. These steps may involve physical action such as fleeing in the opposite direction. Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife when she tried to seduce him. Paul exhorted young Timothy to "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart". Too often we tell sin, "Go away closer". A gambler finding himself near a casino may think that he won't go inside, but soon may find himself in the door, sitting on a stool, "just to look around," but getting as close as possible to the sin he wants to avoid.

Job said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl". Jesus tells us that we can be guilty of adultery just by thinking suggestive thoughts. Job's method to avoid this temptation was by deciding not to look. We need to examine the circumstances that lead to the sin we have asked to be forgiven for, and then avoid repeating it by choosing to stay away from whatever might tempt us to do it. We may need to restrict places we go, stop associating with certain people, censor what we read, or change our habits, so that we can avoid those temptations that we find hard to resist. We must learn from the mistakes we have made and find the strength to avoid them in the future or they will be the undoing of us spiritually.

Jesus tells us that "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son". There is a glorious future awaiting us if we are willing to make the effort now to live faithful lives pleasing to our heavenly Father. We take comfort in the promise that: "There hath no temptation taken us but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

We can overcome with God's help, and God will not try us beyond our ability to resist. Let us then draw on this God given strength and triumph over the temptations we face. Let us confess our faults, learn from our mistakes, correct them with all our hearts, and thank God for the salvation and forgiveness he has brought us through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JUNE 2012

30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. Theme "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23). Youth theme "I will Praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "The Lord Raised Up Judges" (adults) and "Paul's Powerful

Preaching" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord" (adults) and "What Would You Do?" (teens); Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia): "Epistle to James — Be Ye Doers of the Word" (adults) and "How Judge Ye? — Case Studies Based on the Law of Moses" (teens). Information on website www.christadelphians.net/macbs.

JULY 2012

1-7 California Youth Conference at Ojai, CA. An exciting week of study and fellowship for ages 17 (or baptized) and up. The theme is Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians. The speaker will be Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia). Contact www.youthconferencecalifornia.com or Bro. Jason Hensley jason@speakingofhisglory.com.

4-9 Calaveras Family Bible Camp Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Classes will be given by Bro. David Haltom (Pomona, CA) on the topic "The Reality of Discipleship". Contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcDonald@mcDonald-printing.com.

8-14 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. The teachers are Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA): "Scriptural Discipline" adults, and "The Fundamentals of Bible Prophecy" teens; Bro. Stephen Mansfield (Golden Grove, Australia): "1 Corinthians" adults, and "Ephesians" teens; Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia): "The Power of Prayer" adults, and "How Judge Ye?" teens. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland shannonjejh@att.net. Registration forms are on our website: www.swcbs.com.

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

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

21-29 Midwest Bible School will be held at Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Mark Vincent (UK): "Things Done Twice — God's Hand in the Life of Joseph"; Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "The Life of Timothy"; Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Australia): "The King's Manifesto for Life". For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Dr., Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, e-mail: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

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

28-Aug 4 Christadelphian Bible Camp Manitoulin Island, ON The theme is "Be Ye Transformed By the Renewing of Your Mind" The speakers will be Bro. Con Mitsos (Woodville, Australia) on the subject "Josiah the Great Reformer" and Bro. Roger Long (Grosvenor Road, UK) on the subject "From Upper Room to Resurrection". More

details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or 416-284-0290.

29-Aug 4 Rogue River Bible School at Union Creek, OR. Speakers are Bro. Stephen Mansfield: "Peter, The Fragile Stone That Became An Immovable Rock"; Bro. David Jennings: "Scriptural Discipline"; Bro. Jim Cowie: "The Prophecy of Zephaniah". Contact: Sis. Liz Posey robandlziposey@gmail.com.

29-4 Aug Western Christadelphian Bible School at Menucha Camp near Portland, OR. Speakers are Bro. Darren Guy (Halifax, UK): "Wrestling With Jacob"; Bro. Duncan Kenzie (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "21st Century Discipleship"; Bro. Marco Dondero (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "The Prism of Judgement and Wisdom's Rainbow". Website www.menchabibleschool.org. Contact Sis. Jane Szabo, registrar, 541-563-4726.

AUGUST 2012

11-17 Niagara Falls Bible School Theme: "Whatever you do — Work as unto the Lord". Contact Bruce and Barb Abel at 519-925-5297 or at bnb69abel@hotmail.ca.

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

25-31 Vancouver Island Bible Camp at Camp Pringle on beautiful Shawnigan Lake. Speakers are Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Ezekiel — Son of Man"; Bro. Ian Dangerfield (Australia): "Crucified and Risen With Christ"; Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON): "Micah — To Do Justly, to Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly Before Your God". Contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Rd., Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8. Phone: 250-758-4569 e-mail: yvonne2001@shaw.ca website: www.vibiblecamp.com.

31-Sept 2 Brantford, ON Camp Kumah Senior CYC weekend for ages 13 and up. Bro. Darryl Rose (Toronto West, ON) will lead studies on the theme, "The Glory of God." Cost for the weekend is \$20. If financial assistance is required, please let us know. Contact Bro. David Billington dave@visualhabitat.com.

SEPTEMBER 2012

1-2 Victoria, BC Fraternal Gathering. "The Scribes and Pharisees: Were Their Problems Our Problems?" by Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Contact csnobelen@csl.ca.

8 Hamilton Greenaway, ON Fraternal Picnic will be held at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Georgetown, ON, at 2:00pm. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the topic, "Who is My Neighbour? — Lessons from the Parable of the Good Samaritan". A picnic supper will be held at 5:00pm.

9-14 Adult Study Week at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Ballinafad, ON. The week consists of daily interactive Bible study, taken from the last week of Christ's life. Workbooks will be available. Participants may use their own camping equipment, or the covered wagons on site. There are also motels available nearby. The facilities used are provided by Sis. Annette Milne. All meals will be provided. Contact Bro. Jack Robinson jrobins@worldchat.com or Bro. Peter Stonell peter.maggiestonell@gmail.com.

15 Bedford, NS Study day. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the theme, "Galatians". Please contact Julia Snobelen thesnobelens@hotmail.com for more information.

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)

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15 London, Ontario Study Day. The speaker will be Bro. Frank Abel and his topic is: "God Manifestation". There will be three classes, the first class commencing at 11 a.m. Lunch will be provided.

15-16 Paris Avenue, OH Fall Study Weekend Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, Australia) will be speaking on "The Return of Christ".

22 Brantford, ON Prophecy Day will be held this year with our Bro Matt Norton (Lismore, Aust.) speaking on the theme "Revelation Examined & Explained."

OCTOBER 2012

5-7 Midwest Christadelphian Young Couples Weekend will be held at the Garland Resort in Michigan. The purpose of the weekend is to help couples grow and develop in the Truth by drawing on the wisdom, comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures. The content of the weekend is geared toward finding balance between family, ecclesia, work etc., with additional focus on raising a godly family and relationships with extended family. There is an informational power point presentation available for download on www.mcycw.com. Contact Annalee Cooper registration@mcycw.com

5-7 Washington, DC Music Study weekend. Theme: "Make the Voice of His Praise to be Heard!". Study leader will be Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. Contact Bro. David Perry dperry1@gmail.com.

6-7 Atlanta Area, GA Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON).

6-7 Sussex, NB Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD).

13-14 Echo Lake, NJ Fall Study weekend. The speaker is Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) and his subject is "Promises of the Kingdom".

20 Barrie, ON Fall Study day. The theme is, "Modern Challenges for 21st Century Disciples". Subtitles will be "In the world", "In the State", and "In the Ecclesia". For more information please contact Bro. Bruce Abelby 519-925-5297 or bnb69abel@hotmail.com.

NOVEMBER 2012

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

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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August, 2012

No. 7

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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

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

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

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

Introduction to the Special Edition

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 1 — Issues of Separation

The Noise of War — Thoughts on Music



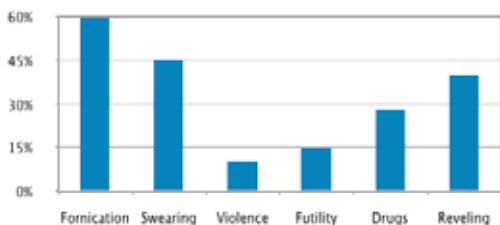
Within the storehouse of classic children's tales is the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin — the fervent flutist who first drew away the town of Hamelin's rats, and afterwards its children, with his hypnotizing music. While the tale is meant to demonstrate the values of trustworthiness and keeping one's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

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

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

The lyrics

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The music of Egypt

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Blessed is he that keepeth his garments

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

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

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

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

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

Music in the battle against sin

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

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

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

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

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

The filter

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dan Osborn (Okanagan Central, BC)

TV in the Life of a Believer



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

Is it a sin?

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

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

Three important principles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Acceptable programs?

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

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

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

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

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

Is it a trespass?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Practical advice

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

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

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

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

Modesty — From the Mouths of Brothers



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

Why talk about clothing?

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

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

Not even a hint

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Questions and answers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Modesty — from the mouths of Brothers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Be modest and then you will be beautiful.”

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)

The Writing is on the Wall: Facebook and the Christadelphians



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

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

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

Avoiding a double life

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What’s the writing on your wall?

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

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

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

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

Levi Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA)

A College Advisory for Christadelphian Young People



Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To the student

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

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

Be honest with yourself

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

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

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

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

Talk to Your parents

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

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

Develop your gifts

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

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

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

In a similar fashion, Brother and Sister Styles wrote:

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

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

Be part of the ecclesia

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

Bill and Carol Link (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

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

A Lesson Learned — from a Father and a Son



Introduction

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

together seek to serve Him in sincerity.

The father, Gordon's, thoughts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Jason's thoughts:

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

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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

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

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

Section 2 — Our Citizenship is not of this World

And Why Shouldn't I Vote?



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

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

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

The Bible – A guidebook, not a rule book

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

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

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

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

Principles bearing on a disciple's relationship to the world

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

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

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

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

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

A Christian's dilemma

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

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

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

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

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

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

Protection & Defense of the State

- military service
- non-combatant service

Support and Maintenance of the State

- taxes

Living in a State

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

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

The critical principle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

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

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

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

Christadelphians and Politics

BASF Clause 35



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What in the world?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Permanent resident

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

James Robinson (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Trade Unions and the Disciple



Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Present day situation

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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

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

Peter Hemingray (Royal Oak, MI)

Notes:

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

Section 3 — Wrestling with the Flesh

Poor Impulse-Control Addictions

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



Statistics first

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

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

A definition with ramifications

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

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

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

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

What can we do?

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

So let's take the following simple passage:

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

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

That is the Bible teaching.

The problem of patterns

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

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

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

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

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

GUILT

Enticement

Triggering Lustful Thinking

Acting on that

Guilt

Repentance / Asking for Forgiveness

Getting Back to God

SHAME

Enticement

Triggering Lustful Thinking

Acting on that

Shame

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

Twelve step programs and secrecy

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

Where's the love?

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

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

Substituting one piece of clothing at a time

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

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

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

Where to begin?

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

A positive conclusion

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

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

David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA)

Notes:

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

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

Michael Woodcock, The Tidings, 1998 p 99.

Alcoholism and Other Substance Abuse



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prevalence in 8th graders:

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

Prevalence in 10th graders:

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

Prevalence in 12th graders:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Problems with alcohol?

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

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

Bob Korbelaak (San Diego County, CA)

Notes:

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

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

Why You Need to Believe in the Devil



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The strongest mechanism people have is self-preservation... sometimes at any cost. The last battle fought by Jesus was against this most basic, fundamental desire, "save thyself". We can appreciate what a terrible, constant struggle it must have been for Jesus to fight this desire to save himself from death. Based on his sharp rebuke of Peter, we can see how this temptation hit home. Peter had said "**Be kind to thyself**" and avoid your death at Jerusalem (Matt 16:22 YLT). To this Jesus put Peter **and that desire** in it's proper place; "*Get thee behind me Satan*"! (v. 23). This strong response shows what a struggle defeating this desire must have been.

In Death, Jesus demonstrated his complete mastery over his enemy. And by death, he condemned sinful flesh and destroyed it. He defeated the strongest desire we all share — to save ourselves, instead allowing his body to be crucified.

The world creeps into every aspect of our lives. The world will consume us if we let it. The only way we can truly "be kind to ourselves" is by denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and following our Lord's footsteps in our spiritual warfare.

Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:

1. Peter Watkins, "*The Devil, the Great Deceiver*," 1971, The Christadelphian, UK, p. 82.
2. *The Christadelphian*, 1938, p. 99.

Section 4 — Biblical Solutions

Your Word I have Hidden in My Heart: Thinking Like Christ



Many of the articles in this special edition of the magazine have been focused on the importance of being different from the majority of the people around us. Many of them have looked at things that are extrinsic — or on the outside. In order to be separate from the world, we can change a number of the things that we do and a number of the things

that we say. However, even if we are able to implement all of these things — even if we are able to wear modest clothing, put aside the music of the world, and stay out of politics — we will still struggle with sin because the world isn't only outside of us, it is inside as well! The Lord himself taught that evil proceeds from the heart of man (Mark 7:21-23). The battle which we fight isn't simply one in which we change the way that we act, but it is a battle which is fought on two fronts — our actions, and our thoughts.

This article is going to focus on changing our thoughts — and the main way to effect a change in the way that we think is to fill our minds with the things that are good. The counsel of the apostle Paul was that the only things that enter into our minds should be those things which are righteous:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

These were the types of things upon which we are to set our minds. We are to seek for the things that are true, for the things that are honest, for the things that are virtuous. If we are able to fill our minds with these types of things, then it is much more likely that those same types of thoughts will come out. Again, the apostle not only wrote this to the Philippians, but he wrote a similar thing to the Colossians:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2).

The calling of the Colossians was to lift their thoughts above the vain thoughts of the world and to think on heavenly things. Such is our calling as well. Just like the saints in Colossae, we are to lift up our minds to God and our thoughts are to transcend the naturally selfish and naturally anxious thoughts of the day. In doing so, we become like the Lord Jesus Christ — whose thoughts were constantly on the things of the Father. He was the perfect representative of God Himself — a man who was able to say, *“he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9)*, and later, *“the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me” (John*

14:24). His every word and his every action were the words and actions of God. His mind was lifted up and was focused on the things which are above — and this is what we long to do! But how did he do it? How did the Lord Jesus keep his mind so focused and keep his thoughts on the things that are good? Surely he put aside things of the world — but what else?

The answer to this question can be found in one of the prophecies about the Lord:

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa 50:4).

This prophecy makes it sound as though each day, the Lord Jesus had a constant flow of God’s word into his mind — morning by morning this word was poured into his ears. This was the foundation of his focus. He spoke the words of God and he thought the words of God because the words of God were constantly being put into his mind. At one point in his ministry, he even explained that he didn’t say anything unless it was something which God had told him to speak:

“And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:50).

The Lord spoke the words which God had given him to speak — his mind was always full of the words of God. If we desire to think on things above and if we desire to think like the Lord Jesus, then we need to put God’s word into our mind in the same way that he did. We need to study that word and we need to seek to understand the things that we read.

In addition, we often refer to ourselves as “*People of the Book*”. With this in mind we should always have a study on which we are working. We should always be looking into things and learning. Having an ongoing study of a subject is for everyone, young and old, male and female. We are the worse if we think “organized study” is just for exhorters, teachers, etc. Study and reading is for everyone. And as a body, we are fortunate to have outlets to share our studies with others, like *The Tidings* and other magazines. Another outlet is teaching a Sunday School or CYC class. It’s important that “*People of the Book*” should know the book — and in doing so, we will be more like the Lord Jesus.

With that goal in mind, this article will touch on a few important aspects of Bible study. It will first look at the importance of being organized about study and setting goals. The second portion of the article will demonstrate the value of asking questions when studying.

Organized study

While organization may be difficult, it is something which can be extremely useful when trying to do Bible study. Without organization and goals, the study really has no direction — it can continue on indefinitely and we will never actually know if we’ve have accomplished what we’ve set out to accomplish. Thus, in this section of the article, it is hoped that some suggestions can be given which are useful for organizing the way in which we do Bible study.

One of the first and most useful things in study is setting goals — really try to define the purpose of the study. If you are doing a study of Elijah, try to define what it is that you are going to look learn about Elijah. Do you want to study his life? Do you want to study prophecies that relate to his second coming? Do you want to compare him with John the Baptist? Unless some of these questions are answered, when you begin your study, you may simply find yourself amassing information, and the study will become so large that it becomes overwhelming. The idea behind having a goal is to help you focus your study on exactly what you want to learn.

Let's say, then, that you have decided that you want to study Elijah's life. The next step is making the goal even more specific. About what part of Elijah's life do you want to learn? Do you want to look at his adventures on Mount Carmel? Do you want to see his interactions with Ahab? There are so many different pieces of his life that - again - if you don't narrow down what you want to learn, it will soon become overwhelming. You may find yourself collecting information from his experiences with the widow of Zarephath, then learning about Naboth's vineyard, and then learning about the letter which he wrote to the king of Judah. Scripture is so full of information about Elijah that you can soon become lost if you don't focus your study.

So, perhaps you decided that you specifically wanted to look at Elijah's adventures on Mount Carmel. Now that your study is focused, you know exactly what you want to learn. Your time studying won't be focused on the Psalms. It won't be focused on the life of Saul. It won't be focused on First or Second Corinthians. Instead, now you know that when you sit down to study, you're going to want to look at 1Kgs 18 and anything related to it. You know that you want to read Christadelphian books that have a section on this piece of Scripture and you are going to want to listen to Bible classes that relate to Elijah on Mount Carmel. Once your study has a focused goal — to learn more about Elijah on Mount Carmel — then it is much easier for you to know when you have met it. However, while this goal is fairly specific, it could still use a little more work regarding when it is complete.

How will you know when you have finished the study? Will you simply be done when you've studied this one chapter for over a year and you're tired of thinking about Elijah on Mount Carmel? This is why it is extremely important to make sure that the goal is specific and achievable — otherwise, you'll have your plan, and again, you won't ever know if it has been fulfilled. So, it's important to develop a way in which you will know that you are finished. Some different ideas are as follows:

- Study the subject for a month and then move on to a different topic.
- Study the subject until you have gone through all the details of each verse in that chapter.
- Study the subject until you feel as though you could write a Bible class on it.

These are simply a few suggestions of ways to know when a study is over — there are certainly other options. The important idea is that the goal for the study must be measurable. You must know when you have fulfilled your goal — don't simply say: "I am going to study this chapter until I understand it." How will you know

when that has been reached? If it doesn't have a definite end point, you may find yourself studying it for months on end until you just get frustrated because you don't think there is anything else to learn about it. Then, even though you are more or less done with the study, your study has ended on an unpleasant note. Rather, it is better to choose a measurable end point — perhaps you will study through each verse of 1Kgs 18 until you reach the end of the chapter. Then, as you go from verse to verse, you will be able to see how far away you are from your goal and it will be clear when you have met it.

Thus, focused and measurable goals are extremely helpful when organizing study.

The importance of questions

Another helpful strategy for Bible study is asking questions — whenever we read, whether we are doing the daily readings or reading for our own personal study, it is imperative that we ask questions. Questions are the tools that we can use to get deeper into the text. For instance, when reading through the story of David and Goliath, there is a verse which seems fairly inconspicuous — but when it is thought about further, it reveals an interesting question:

“And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a script; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine” (1Sam 17:40).

When David was preparing to fight against the Philistine, he took five smooth stones from the brook. This is a fairly familiar verse to a number of us — when remembering the story of David and Goliath, this picture of David going to gather up five stones comes to mind. Yet have you ever asked yourself why it was that David took five stones? Was it because he thought that perhaps he would miss four times and he wanted to make sure that his stone found its mark? This may seem to be the most obvious answer — but upon reading further, this doesn't actually seem to fit. When speaking to Goliath, David was sure that he would win — and not only did he say that he would kill the giant, but he specified how he would kill him and who else he was planning on killing:

*“This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and **I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines** this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1Sam 17:46).*

When David went up to fight against the giant, he was filled with confidence in his God. He knew that God would win the battle. In fact, he was so confident that he would win, that he proclaimed to Goliath that he was going to cut off his head — even when David didn't have a sword (v. 50)! Not only so, but he also stated that he was going to defeat the entire army of the Philistines. David was so confident in his victory that he didn't merely plan on fighting Goliath and chopping off his head — but he said that he would single handedly destroy the whole troop of the Philistines. This doesn't seem to be the David who would take five stones from the brook, just in case he happened to miss.

Rather, perhaps there was another reason. Later in the record it is revealed that Goliath wasn't the only Philistine giant - in fact there were four of them, including Goliath's brother (2Sam 21:15-22). Isn't that intriguing? Here was David, a man who was prepared to fight against the entire army of the Philistines by himself — and he brought five stones, because there just so happened to be five giants, including two in Goliath's family. Could that have been David's reasoning? Was David hoping to not only destroy Goliath, but also all of the other giants?

It is through asking simple questions — such as, “Why did David choose five smooth stones?” that the stories of Scripture can really start to come alive. Questions can really jump-start Bible study — and keep in mind that they do not always need to be answered immediately. With the question above, it might not have been answered until a month or so later, when you came to 2Sam 21 in the readings. Nevertheless, if there is a question, make a quick note of it somewhere — in the margin of your Bible, in a notepad for questions, or on your computer — so that you don't forget the questions for which you are trying to find answers.

Conclusion

There are many different helps for studying the Bible — and these are simply two which I have found to be immensely useful. Making goals has helped me to get my study organized and helped keep me from getting overwhelmed at the vastness of things to learn in Scripture. Asking questions has really provoked me to search for answers and has helped to create a picture in my mind of the way that different characters in Scripture might have thought or what might have caused them to act in the way that they did. All in all, may these two suggestions help you as you try to fill your mind with the Word of God. By constantly reading and studying Scripture, we can elevate our thinking and not only be separate from the world in our actions, but also in our thoughts. In so doing, we can follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ — which, truly, is the ultimate goal.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Keep Yourself From Idols



Even today we can find people around the world bowing down to images made of wood, stone and metal. And while we don't worship idols like this or like the ancient Israelites did, we are not immune to idolatry. Many exhortations have been given about the man on a bended knee, polishing his boat or car until his own image is reflected back.

The problem of picturing idols as physical things misses the mark. In our minds, idols are things we touch and handle. This is the reason Josiah and others failed. They could destroy idols by smashing them to pieces, yet that NEVER destroyed the source of idolatry, the heart.

Idle Thoughts lead to Idol Thoughts. Idols are things we choose to let live in our hearts.

“Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?” (Ezek 14:3).

Getting serious with idolatry means getting serious with ourselves and the way we think.

Consider all the wrong thoughts we let meander through our minds. Rarely do we interfere with them, we just let them run their course until our attention is finally diverted to something else. This is why idolatry is so persistent! We don't think about what we are thinking about. Then to make it worse, we store up our favorite wrong thoughts for some later time to be conjured up again and again.

Paul says:

“Put to death your earthward inclinations — fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry... and you also were once addicted to them, while you were living under their power. But now you must rid yourselves of every kind of sin” (Col 3:5,7-8 Weymouth).

Idolatry results when we don't control our wrong thoughts and desires! The cost of idolatry is turmoil. We will not experience inner peace unless our thoughts are directed towards our Father. Isaiah confirms this: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isa 26:3).*

The word “mind” that Isaiah uses means “Imaginations,” i.e. the desires of our heart! What do you imagine? What do you replay in your mind over and over? This simple question is a good spiritual barometer of our health.

What's especially evil about idolatry is more than just evil desires. The most insidious effect of idolatry is that it causes us to suspend our belief in the Father.

Think about this; if we believe in God, and believe that he sees us, cares for us, walks with us, and knows our thoughts, then when we sin we push all these beliefs out of our mind. And while we are sinning God is nowhere to be found! While sinning, we don't believe God is with us or sees us. We don't think of God until our sins are complete. We have displaced God out of our Heart!

We see an example of this in the record of the Kings. King Ahaz journeyed to Damascus where he saw an altar. He commanded it be copied and built in Jerusalem. The context of this passage in Kings indicates that this new altar was placed in the temple courtyard displacing the real altar of God made by Solomon.

“The bronze altar that stood before the LORD he brought from the front of the temple — from between the new altar and the temple of the LORD — and put it on the north side of the new altar” (2Kgs 16:14 NIV).

In the center of God's house, this evil king displaced God's own altar with another one of his own design.

Are we any different? “*Ye are the temple of the living God?*” (2 Cor 6:16). When we were baptized, we became God’s house, and when we sin, we not only displace God from his house within us, we also momentarily suspend our belief in him, pushing him out of our consciousness.

Stagnant in spirit

The Prophet Zephaniah lived at the same time as Ezekiel and saw the same problems. He witnessed Josiah searching through Jerusalem for idols to destroy. But Josiah missed the real source of idolatry, the hearts.

“It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts the Lord will not do good or evil” (Zeph 1:12 NASB).

These were men who did not think God saw or cared what they thought about.

Solomon, standing in front of God’s temple refers to this stagnation as “the plague of the heart”. When we find the wrong things in our hearts Solomon says the cure begins with prayer.

“any prayer, any supplication from any man of all Your people Israel, who shall each know the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house, then hear in Heaven Your dwelling-place, and forgive,” (1Kgs 8:38-39 NKJV).

When we find a desire that doesn’t belong, removal begins with prayer to a faithful God who will forgive. In proverbs, Solomon gives another clue:

“More than all else keep a watch over your heart since here are the well springs of life” (Prov 4:23 Jerusalem Bible).

In Proverbs 4 you will see that what flows from the “well springs of life” are God’s words. If the living waters of God’s word are flowing in our heart, how could it become stagnant?

Solomon continues in vs. 25: “*Let thine eyes look right on and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*” This is echoed in Heb 12:2: “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*” The word “looking” in Greek only occurs here. It means to stare, to have your eyes fixed fully on it, to have your eyes locked on to something. In this case our focus is completely on our Lord Jesus. And the reason our gaze must be fixed on Jesus is because “*the sin which doth so easily beset us*” (Heb 12:1).

Think on these things

We really can control what we think about. There are thoughts and ideas we can NEVER think about. If they were to enter our minds, we would be repulsed and crush them! We all have done this. Now we need to train ourselves to be repulsed by sinful thoughts. One strategy is shared with the Philippians when Paul stresses the need to think Godly thoughts.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things

are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

And when you think of the verse in the opposite it isn’t so hard to follow. i.e. don’t think of false, dishonest things. Don’t think of unjust, impure, ugly things. If we think about what we are thinking about, these thoughts are easy to spot and crush. We can easily replace them with something better. Even if it’s just a verse we repeat by rote until the thought has passed. “It is written...” was Jesus’ reaction to wrong thoughts entering his own mind. We should have similar verses in our arsenal ready for our trials.

When we allow wrong thinking in our hearts, we’re hardening it. We’re taking a living, moving, beating soft tissue organ and we’re making it hard because we’re engraving in it, scarring it with things that shouldn’t be there. The Psalmist comments on idolatry:

“Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat” (Psa 115:4-7).

And the key to this passage is verse 8, *“They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.”* In the end, we become just as dead and lifeless as the Idol in our heart.

The prophet Isaiah said:

“Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not” (Isa 8:2-9).

The Apostle John summarizes all this with the simple words, *“Little children keep your selves from Idols” (1John 5:21).*

Commenting on this verse, Brother Dennis Gillett writes:

“Faithful Bible readers will know that when the conflict between good and evil is distilled to its very essence, it is the conflict between the true God and idols. John says that the problem is ‘the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.’ It is a perpetual contest for the disciple in this period of probation.”¹

This special issue of The Tidings was written to help all of us during our period of probation. It is the prayer of everyone contributing to this issue that all the various idols of the flesh that pull us from God might be destroyed, one by one. Until that day, let us have hearts fixed upon our Lord and do our best to *“keep yourselves from idols”*.

Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*: 1991, p. 417.

Holiness

Holiness

Introduction

It is difficult to think of a word that is more out of touch with modern society than *Holiness*. The word seems to belong to another age. Holiness is related to ideas like purity, virtue, righteousness, and other qualities the world is happy to abandon to antiquity. The reason our society finds Holi-

ness so objectionable is because by its very definition, it implicates everything that stands in contrast to it. It is no surprise, then, that today's world associates Holiness with intolerance, prejudice, and arrogance.

Simply put, being holy is being different. And in a certain way, the world loves those who are different, by idolizing those who are broad minded enough to justify almost every path along the broad road to destruction. As disciples of Christ, we are bombarded every day with worldly advice to follow our heart and find our own way, while the Scripture warns us of the deceptiveness of our hearts and our natural inability to navigate our lives for our own good. Holiness **unto God**, is the true less-travelled road. The Lord Jesus said so himself: "*Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it*" (Matt 7:14).

But we believe in the Living God, who has revealed Himself in the pages of the Bible. We believe that whoever comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him (Heb 11:6). And to those who seek Him He says, "...*ye shall be **holy unto me**: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine*" (Lev 20:26). Holiness, then, flows from God. "*Ye shall be holy **unto me**.*" He is the source of all Holiness, and so it is His right to define it. But today's world obsesses over the rights of its inhabitants while ignoring the demands of God on His creation.

Uzziah

About 2700 years ago, there was a man who thought he was holy. He saw himself different from, better than, his brethren; and his self-estimation led him to believe that he knew better than God. The man's name was Uzziah. He ruled over a prosperous Judah for over five decades, sincerely seeking Him at the beginning of his reign (2Chron 26:5). After many blessed years, he apparently made up his mind that he was worthy to enter into the temple to offer incense, which was the exclusive privilege of the high priest of Levi. Perhaps his transgression grew from a distorted desire to be like the great king-priest, after Melchizedek's order in Psalm 110. Whatever the reason, Uzziah received an immediate response from the High and Lofty One, who rejected his arrogant incense. What the king had hoped to be his inaugural day as high priest became the setting for one of the most ironic judgments in all of Scripture. There, upon his forehead, the king's leprosy declared his sin to the whole nation. The high priest under Moses' law also wore a sign upon his forehead which read — "*Holiness unto Yahweh*". It was Yahweh's Holiness that Uzziah had defamed.

That very year, the same year king Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision of the glory of God. There, upon His throne, He reigned uncontested as a striking contrast to the king that had sat on David's throne for so long.

Isaiah's call to prophetic office stands as a clear contrast to Uzziah's sin, and reminds us how necessary it is for us to be humble before our Heavenly Father. This is exactly why Isaiah's vision in chapter six is said to have taken place "*in the year king Uzziah died*".

Uzziah inherited the kingdom from his father Amaziah when he was sixteen years old. His country had been humiliated from an Israelite invasion from the north, and we might assume from Uzziah's military zeal that he was determined to protect Judah from future invasions. Looking at the Chronicles narrative, the king's strength and industry cannot be missed. Consider the following outline of Uzziah's reign in 2Chron 26:

- verses 1-5 *Summary*
- verses 6-8 *Breaking down the walls of his enemies*
- verses 9-10 *Building up the land of Judah*
- verses 11-15 *Judah's military strength*
- verses 16-21 *Uzziah's arrogance and punishment*
- verses 22-23 *Uzziah's death and burial*

He began so well with admirable intentions, seeking his God during Zechariah's days. He found amazing success in his seeking because he was helped and strengthened by God. It seems that no corner of the land lacked the benefits of his wonderful industry. The land flowed with water, milk, and fruit of every kind, and the name of Uzziah echoed around the whole region as Judah's enemies humbly brought tribute. The land was filled with the king's glory. For the first time since the days of Solomon, the finery of Tarshish flowed once again into the kingdom. Surrounded with peace and filled with plenty, Judah's new generation would probably have had no firsthand memory of the war their nation suffered through years before. Judah was different than the nations around him, and its king was different, too. In his younger days, Uzziah recognized Yahweh's Holiness by humbly seeking Him, and He answered him in mercy. But now, after years of God-given success, the king on Judah's throne grew confident in his own strength. He believed that he was entitled to transcend the law of God.

This was the setting for Uzziah's arrogant transgression. "*But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction*" (2Chron 26:16 NKJV). The king's heart was lifted up and soared so high above his brothers' that their rebukes could not reach him. So the famous king marched arrogantly into the temple, in a land that reflected his glory to approach his God Who had so graciously blessed him. It was a dramatically ironic moment. Uzziah had certainly offered many prayers as a young man when he sought God, but now he was looking to offer a different kind of incense. We know that incense is explicitly used in Scripture as a symbol for prayer (Psa 141:2; Rev 8:3-4). This time, Uzziah's approach was all wrong. His prayer would not be heard. There were no priests that stood at his side to encourage him in his work and sing his praises. Instead, the king stood face to face with

the priest, and eighty other priests collectively warned Uzziah that what he was about to do would not bring him the glory he now desired. Adding to this sad irony, were the names of the king and the priest. They shared a name — Azariah. Azariah was Uzziah's other name (according to the King's account) and Azariah was also the name of the chief priest who let the opposition against the king. For the king, Azariah spoke to what God had done in his life in the past; but for the priest, Azariah spoke to what God was about to do in response to his faithful fight against a rebellious king. Uzziah directed his anger to priests, but especially to Azariah who held the position he coveted. Upon that man's head, as upon every high priest's head, was the mitre with a golden inscription that read: "Holiness to Yahweh." How the king must have coveted that symbol of the priesthood! But the writing on his forehead was both completely different and completely appropriate.

Leprosy!

He was not the king-priest after Melchizedek's order. By God's direct judgment upon him, he was manifested as the high priest of apostasy. His thinking was corrupt, having forgotten a simple truth that is found throughout the Word but is expressed in the proverb — *"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life"* (Prov 22:4). He once revered Yahweh and His Holiness, but he blinded himself in his pride. Though we cannot be sure when the earthquake struck during his reign (Amos 1:2; Zech 14:5), it would certainly be fitting if it took place when Josephus recorded it did — during the moment the leprosy struck him. The king who sought his own Holiness, received it. He was given his own house and separated from his people. He sowed and reaped his own corruption.

Isaiah's vision

Could there be a more striking contrast than Isaiah's call in chapter 6? There, sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up sat the King — Yahweh of hosts. How unlike Judah's recent tenant this King is! He sits on His throne in the highest heaven with His attendants — the flaming servants, the seraphim. They sing in call and response that Yahweh's glory fills the earth, and shake the earth with their cries as the King's train fills the temple. And before this amazing display stands the prophet.

If you saw the glory of Yahweh, what would you do? How would you feel if you saw a vision of the High and Lofty One sitting on His throne in awesome beauty? What would you say as you heard the cries of the seraphim, singing with such power as to make the posts of the door of the temple tremble at the sound? This was the vision of the prophet Isaiah, and he remembered it for the rest of his life. The seraphim were singing, *"Holy, holy, holy, the LORD of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory"* (Isa 6:3) — and Isaiah never forgot that song. It echoes throughout his entire prophecy. In the presence of such glorious majesty, it is worth considering his humble response.

It is important to notice what the prophet did not do — he did not take the song into his lips. He did not count himself worthy to sing it, confessing instead: *"I am*

a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isa 6:5). It was not that he could not understand it, because Yahweh had long prophesied about a time when the whole earth would be filled with His glory (Num 14:21). The glory of God is not limited to breathtaking displays of His visible hand; it is much more often connected with the quieter and sometimes unnoticed qualities of His character, which are lived out in the lives of His children. When Moses asked to see the glory of Yahweh, He declared to him His Name which cannot be separated from His mercy, grace, patience, goodness, and truth. Isaiah’s vision left him nearly breathless, and His brief reaction is very telling. His first words were, “*Woe is me, for I am **undone**,*” or *cut-off* as the margin has it. He expected to die in the presence of such glory. But there is grace and truth in the Father’s glory, and Isaiah never forgot it.

To those who have ears to hear, there is a song that echoes throughout the pages of Isaiah’s prophecy. It is a continuation of the song of the seraphim in praise to Yahweh for His Holiness. For the rest of his life, Isaiah never forgot what his God had done for him. And to celebrate Him as the Holy God that makes His children holy, Isaiah called him by a very special name. So important is this name that Isaiah uses it more than anyone else in Scripture. Even though he could not sing the seraphim’s holy song in the beginning, Isaiah could sing His praises in his own life after receiving the blessing of forgiveness, and called His God *The Holy One of Israel*.

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

His children are called by His holy name. If we are to bear His name in the future around His throne, when we sing to Him in newness of life, we must reflect the glory of His holy character now. What a fitting picture we are given, then, in Rev 14. Its details remind us that the same writer who inspired the ancient prophecy of Isaiah and record of the Kings and Chronicles, inspired this remarkable prophecy, too. Here is the true King with his attendants. Here they stand as priests before the throne, singing with all their beings to the glory of the Father, no longer humiliated by unclean lips — but who sing without guile.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:... These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:1-5).

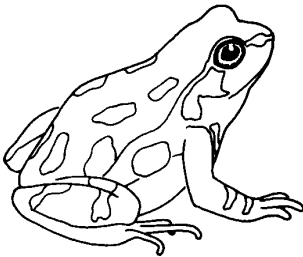
Brothers and sisters, let us never forget the Holiness of our Heavenly Father. In our prayers, our aspirations, our successes and failures, as future king-priests around his throne, let us all live in the Holiness of Yahweh.

*So shalt Thou, LORD, from me, e'en me,
Receive the glory due;
And even now shall I begin
The song for ever new. (Hymn 82)*

Contrasts

- The King on His Throne : 2Chron 26:1 cp. Isa 6:1,5
 - The Priest after Melchizedek's Order: 2Chron 26:16 cp. Isa 6:1
 - High and Lifted Up: 2Chron 26:16,19 cp. Isa 6:1
 - In the Temple: 2Chron 26:16,21 cp. Isa 6:1
 - With His Attendants: 2Chron 26:17 cp. Isa 6:2
 - Full of His Glory: 2Chron 26:8,15 cp. Isa 6:3
 - A Great Shaking: 2Chron 26:20; Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5 cp. Isa 6:4
 - Approaching before Yahweh: 2Chron 26:16 cp. Isa 6:5
 - Burning Incense: 2Chron 26:16-19 cp. Isa 6:6
 - Answering Prayers: 2Chron 26:19,21 cp. Isa 6:7
 - Judgment on the People: 2 Kgs 15:37; cp. 2Chron 26:6-15 cp. Isa 6:9-13
- Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Rd, ON)*

A Minute Meditation — Boiling Frogs



The story goes that if you put a live frog into boiling water that it will immediately spring out to escape the heat. If, on the other hand, you put a live frog into cooler water where it is comfortable, and then add heat slowly, the frog will not notice the change until it is too late and too tired to jump out of the boiling water. The spiritual lesson we learn from this simple story is that the world and its thinking can creep into our minds so gradually and insidiously that we are not aware of the dangers of its

thinking until it has successfully corrupted our minds from the Truth.

Not possible? Compare a sheltered elderly sister to a young brother who has to work in the rough and tumble world of construction. If the elderly sister hears someone swear, she is shocked beyond belief. If the young brother hears someone take the Lord's name in vain, or some other profanity, he is so used to it that it does not shock him at all, because he hears it every day at work.

It is too easy to become hardened to all the sins that surround us out in the world these days, so that the sins do not seem so exceedingly sinful to us anymore. God's ways are completely different from man's ways. The world is surprised that we have a problem with practices such as profanity, or drunkenness, or folks living together before marriage and other lifestyle choices they make. Sadly, the next step after becoming accustomed to the ways of those we rub shoulders with in the world, is to become less judgmental of them. We may even find ourselves, or some of our young people, accepting their standards as normal rather than resisting them.

After all, those in the world are often very “nice” people who are kind, truthful, and hard working. Practices can enter our community, perhaps our families, and we feel less critical, more accepting, of what we previously might have considered unthinkable. Let us pray that when our Lord comes to call us that he may be able to see that, while we have been in the world, we have not become part of the world.

We must never get so used to the sins of the world that they no longer seem so bad. Our situation can be compared to that of Lot who was living in Sodom. Peter tells us that God “delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:”

Are we vexed every day? Do we stand up for godly standards even when it is unpopular and considered harsh or rigid thinking? Do we impress upon our young people the importance of chastity, separateness from the world, daily Bible readings, attendance at ecclesial functions, and keeping the commandments?

In spite of the fact that Lot was vexed everyday by the terrible conditions that existed in Sodom, sadly his married children did not share his concerns and refused to leave when Lot begged them to flee with him. Had his children become tolerant of their sinning neighbors? Did they think that Lot was a bit fanatic? Certainly his grown children did not take him seriously and refused to leave with him. Growing up they had been part of Abraham’s family and been taught the ways of righteousness, but after leaving Abraham and living in Sodom they had become accustomed to the sins of that awful place and were complacent when the moment of decision arrived. Lot lost most of his family, including some of his children and perhaps grandchildren. We don’t want to lose our family.

We need to be constantly on guard that the sinful way of life of those around us does not change our godly thinking. We are to come out from the world and be separate. Just how separate are we? Paul gives us good advice when he says, “I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such people.”

Our policy should be to not become involved with our worldly neighbors, except by our good example and our attempt to show them the beauties of the Truth. We are in the world, and we can’t help that, but we are not to take part in their worldly activities, and certainly we are not to get so used to their way of life that we are not vexed by the way they live and begin to accept it. Just because “everyone is doing it” does not make it right. We need to keep ourselves pure and strive to help our brothers and sisters to remain faithful to godly standards. We must work to make sure the standards of the world do not become acceptable to those who are striving to be servants of God.

We are not everyone. We have been given a high and holy calling, and we are thankful for this calling and must never take it for granted. We must never let down our guard to those that surround us, and who are not journeying in the way of life towards the Kingdom. If we want to be the called out ones of the Lord we must seek those things that are above, not those from beneath. We cannot sit in the tepid water of the world and allow it to heat us until it kills us. Let us remove ourselves from its influence. We need to stand out from the world just as Noah did and as did Lot, who never accepted the way of life that his neighbors had. We need to keep ourselves, our families, and fellow believers separate from the world around us.

The Lord Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father just before he was crucified and said: "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one."

Robert J. Lloyd

HOLINESS AMONG THE BRETHREN

Jesus had to say to his disciples on one occasion, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," — that is, the manner of spirit appertaining to the family to which they belonged. It is to be feared the same remark is true of many who embrace the truth in our day — though under a different heading. They would not in words deny that holiness becomes — belongs to — characterizes the house of God. They would admit that it is true that they are called to be holy: but they nullify their admission by the restricted interpretation they put upon it. It would be hard to put into words their idea of holiness; but it is practically limited to our abstract relation in Christ — i.e., the light in which God regards us in Christ. It is not in their treatment of the subject allowed to include personal habit or condition.

It requires but a small degree of familiarity with the Scriptures to see the narrowness — the dangerous deficiency — of such a conception of the subject. It is true that holiness in its Scriptural definition begins and has its foundation in what has been accomplished in Christ; and that we are holy and without blame in the justification we have by faith in him; but that it goes much further is the lesson of every epistle of Paul, and of every indication contained in that "form of the knowledge and of the truth" which God has given us in the law. We are to be holy in ourselves, as well as in Christ; holy in "all manner of conversation" (behavior) (1 Peter 1:15; Eph. 1:7; 5:24; 2 Peter 3:11): "holy both in body and spirit" (1 Cor. 7:34) "clean from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1). It is the express command of Christ. The command is reiterated by the apostles, as above, and in many other places.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian, 1893, p 386.

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of the Kingdom of God

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Peter Hemingray, Editor

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All Things Bright and Beautiful

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.*

*Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors,
He made their tiny wings.*

*The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.*

*He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.*

Cecil F. Alexander

Editorial

The Situation in Ontario and Illinois

The background

As many must be aware, the brotherhood in Ontario is in something of a state of disruption. Much effort is being spent discussing, debating, and having meetings concerning the situation, which is undoubtedly detracting from time which could be spent in more spiritually profitable areas. Some ecclesias have split, with many groups and individuals moving between ecclesias because they were unhappy with the actions of the majority of their ecclesias. Some ecclesias have begun to refuse the emblems to members of ecclesias with whom they used to be associated. Furthermore, the problem has spread to Bible Schools and other gatherings, both within and outside the area. This disruption is beginning to affect the whole continent, with some ecclesias, thousands of miles away, agitating to decide on their responses to the situation. This is somewhat understandable, as little appears to be happening to resolve the situation, but is against the strong counsel of the pioneer brethren, and others, to let the local ecclesias handle the situation.¹

So what are the causes of this disruption? We can here only briefly summarize a complex situation.

- A group of Unamended ecclesias (4 in Ontario, 5 in Illinois) have been welcomed into fellowship by a group of 10 Amended ecclesias in Ontario, on the basis of a document called the UA08 (Unity Agreement 2008).
- The document is largely based on a previous document called the NASU (North American Statement of Understanding), which was created in 2003 to form the potential basis of a continent wide re-union of the two communities, the “Amended” and the “Unamended”. This was rejected by the majority of the Unamended, but accepted by a majority of those Amended Ecclesias who actually voted. Thus this non-binding preliminary vote, whatever its relevance to any subsequent re-union effort, showed clearly the divide between the two communities, and the continent-wide re-union effort was abandoned.
- The UA08 has been criticized by some for its ambiguity. It is disputed whether it is equivalent to “The Biblical Principles of the Truth, of which the BASF is a true statement”. (This phrasing is the one typically used by Amended gatherings and ecclesias as their basis of fellowship.)²
- The form the UA08 fellowship practice has taken has been criticized on two main counts
 - The UA08 Unamended ecclesias have continued to welcome into fellowship members of some (almost always pro-NASU) Unamended ecclesias which have not signed on to the UA08 agreement. (The UA08 Unamended ecclesias are, by agreement, not in fellowship with those anti-NASU, Andrewite, and Advocate Unamended ecclesias who have explicitly disassociated themselves from the UA08 Unamended ecclesias.)³

- These “UA08” Unamended have also not declared they are part of the larger Amended fellowship, nor have they been commended to, or welcomed by, most of the rest of the Amended ecclesias in North America.
- Some ecclesias in the area have strongly objected to both the document and the associated fellowship practice. They have taken steps to disassociate themselves from the UA08 Amended, not welcoming them into fellowship and taking steps to ensure that some joint activities, such as Bible Schools, follow the same exclusionary practice. This has begun to spread outside the area.
- Other ecclesias in the area have to date largely stood aside from this dispute, although this situation seems likely to change in the near future.
- Although the two main groups involved, the UA08 ecclesias in Ontario and a group of ecclesias known as “PTRU”⁴ ecclesias, have had a few meetings, of late these have devolved into exchanges of multi-page documents with no agreement at present in prospect.

More recently, the PTRU ecclesias have written letters to the committees of three Christadelphian magazines, *The Tidings* (NA), *The Christadelphian* (UK), and *The Lampstand* (AUS), appealing for help in mediating the dispute. As the UA08 ecclesias hold that the disagreement can be resolved locally, they did not agree for any mediation to take place. All three magazines have declined to become officially involved in any such mediation. However, they all agreed that the committee of *The Tidings* was in the best position to help with the situation, and some efforts have already been made in this direction. Note the committee can only consult, and perhaps in some cases advise, but we have no authority over any ecclesia or group of ecclesias. Ecclesial autonomy is to be preserved, subject only to the guidance of the local ecclesias and an appeal to the Scriptures when disputes arise. This guidance is based on the wise counsel of Bro. Robert Roberts to be found in the *Ecclesial Guide*, sections 41 and 42.

Future actions

In addition to any unofficial efforts which might take place, *The Tidings* Committee has agreed to try to help the situation in the following ways:

- We will communicate in the future some of the significant events concerning this situation. We have, up to present, considered the situation of local concern, which should be handled locally, but the spread of the disruption outside the area has led us to reconsider.
- We will present in this magazine a series of articles, starting next month, the first one summarizing the Biblical principles behind our fellowship practice. A previous more historical and practical article on a similar vein has had widespread acceptance; this article, entitled “Fellowship Practice of Central Ecclesias”, appeared in December 2008 and is available on *The Tidings* website (www.tidings.org).
- In subsequent issues, God willing, we intend to cover related topics such as:
 - Examples of past re-unions, to guide us as we consider the present situation.
 - How to handle situations of distant ecclesias, and perhaps their members,

whose actions or statements may have caused concern.

- The Biblical and practical basis of handling inter-ecclesial disputes.

The committee will also continue their un-official contacts with all the parties to the disputes, recognizing these contacts will inevitably be known to very few outside those directly involved. The time has long passed for formal presentations and the widespread dissemination of polemical material. By God's grace and with the correct Christ-like attitudes of all involved, we are confident that a way can be found to eliminate the disruption in the area, and heal the breaches that have developed. There will be few, if any, reports of such discussions, but it is hoped that the progress that has already been made will continue. It is encouraging that some proposals have already been put forward to handle the fusing of some of the groups in a way typical of past re-unions, and we can only pray that these efforts bear fruit.

We acknowledge that all things will be resolved by our Lord at the judgment seat, which we pray will soon come. We all desire to be part of the one body of Christ; as Paul says:

I therefore... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph 4:1-6).

*Peter Hemingray and Joe Hill,
on behalf of*

The Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee

Notes:

1. This topic will be dealt with further in an upcoming article.
2. Many ecclesias, both worldwide and on this continent, have ecclesial "Statements of Faith" which differ from the BASE, but are considered equivalent.
3. Unamended ecclesias that are signatories to the UA08 have declared their dissociation from such ecclesias: "A number of ecclesias have declared their rejection of NASU and of our ecclesias due to our support of NASU, finding the expressions on doctrinal issues fundamentally unacceptable. Accordingly, we are no longer in fellowship with these ecclesias... Should these withdrawing ecclesias seek fellowship with us at some future point, we would continue to view them as out of fellowship, thus requiring comprehensive discussions with them to satisfy ourselves that we are indeed walking together on a sound common scriptural basis" (<http://ua08.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Unamended-UA08-Ecclesias-.pdf>).
4. PTRU (Proposal to Restore Unity) was a group of five ecclesias formed when the initial UA08 proposal was adopted by four Toronto area Amended ecclesias. They came up with a proposal called UA10, which was the same as the UA08 but with two additional clarifications. This was an attempt to reconcile the difficulties that then existed doctrinally, but its adoption was superseded by other problems.

**Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org.
Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone.**

**Submissions under 300 words are encouraged
— the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions
for length and clarity.**

Exhortation

Choosing Your Attitude (and Your Life)

Eve's choice

The other day I was listening to the radio and a gentleman came on the line. He was relating a story about his wife. Apparently she was rather sick, possibly terminally ill. As the details spilled out, the part that caught my attention was how he dealt with it. As my mind drifted in contemplation of his plight, I put myself in his shoes, as tired, worn out from working all day, and coming home, to my wife asking me if she's going to make it through the next week. In the gentleman's words, you could hear the years of pain and sorrow in his voice. It was thick with his sorrows. Then the story changed. He said he couldn't be morose, he couldn't be down; his wife, his son — they looked to him for help and support every day, even after his long days. He said he would sit in his truck before going in the house, and maybe even cry, but he would come into that house, and he would put on a positive face, the good foot forward. His story got me thinking, he had it exactly right: We *choose* our attitude, and even more broadly, we *choose* our life. This is a thread that runs right off the pages of the Bible and into our lives.

Consider the first of these Biblical threads, concerning Adam and Eve.

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." ' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen 3:1-7).

This story is very familiar to most everyone. We know it, as the title in my Bible says, as "The Temptation and Fall of Man." This is the first thread of the lesson God is trying to teach us. The serpent presents Eve with a *choice*, the choice of trusting God, or, as the Bible coyly notes, eating a fruit that was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and could make you like God. I would surmise that Eve had thought about that fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil long before she ate it. Like placing a cookie jar on an ever higher shelf to remove the temptation, the woman had forbidden herself to even touch it. God's original instruction was simply just not to eat of it; He said nothing about not touching it. Eve, and then Adam, were given a choice, and they chose to disobey the command of their Creator.

Put yourself there for a second and then listen to James...

“each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14-15).

The decision of Adam and Eve follow that exact pattern. They looked upon the fruit, drawn to its tasty-looking delightfulness. Their eyes now bright, you can imagine, whether with bated breath or with driven impulse, they hear the words of the serpent, stroking their ego, saying, “you’ll be like God” and thinking, “well it is tasty” and so they choose, they bite, and then the consequences followed:

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19).

So, as Paul would say, and James would elaborate, the wages for those who choose sin is death.

Manasseh’s choice

The choices in the Bible are not always to continue in the path of fallen man. Man sometimes can go the opposite way. In the Chronicles of the Kings, we find the story of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah. Hezekiah is always noted as one of the more faithful kings in the Old Testament. He did many good things in the eyes of God, and God helped him in the great battle with the Rabshakeh, Sennacherib and the Assyrians. But after him, came Manasseh. We read a summary of his reign:

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel” (2Chron 33:1-2).

The writer of the Chronicles make it pretty clear that Manasseh’s choice was to not follow in the way of his father Hezekiah, or in the ways of the LORD. In fact, he emphatically rejected them. The end result was that...

“Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2Chron. 33:9).

As you would expect, his enemies came to him, and drew him out. He was in the deepest of hells, as the Assyrians “took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon...and when he was in affliction...” (2Chron. 33:11).

He was in the hell of his choosing. At this point, it seems he finally came to his senses; desperation and plenty of time to contemplate the consequences of one’s choices will do that. So what does Manasseh do? What would you do?

“He (Manasseh) implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God” (2Chron. 33:12-13).

The second thread we pull is that not all choices are of the Adam and Eve variety, the ones which end in sin. Some choices bring redemption, for that is how God created us. He created us with a choice. Manasseh is emblematic of that dichotomy; he made the choices that walked away from God, and in fact defied God to His very face in that he was worse than the people God kicked out of the land to make room for His chosen ones. In the end, though, Manasseh made the choice to come back to God.

In this thread we pulled, I think we see choices in our own lives. Like the original story we started with, the man in that story wasn't confronted with an easy choice. It may seem obvious, but obvious does not make easy.

Some other choices are not so obvious, even in Manasseh's case: Was it obvious he was going to choose God, when to do so he had to turn his back on how he had lived his entire life? It's like an alcoholic admitting to himself that he is the problem, it's not someone else's fault. Again, from the outside it can seem to be an obvious choice, even a simple one, but it's like teaching an old dog new tricks; it isn't easy, nor is it easy for someone to truly look into the mirror and strip away everything that they are, and turn away from it. But that's what Manasseh did.

Our choice

It is exactly what the New Testament writers are talking about when Nicodemus says to Jesus, *"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* (John 3:4).

Life is full of choices, some seem simple, some innocuous, some difficult, some simply don't seem to have an easy answer.

We all face them each and every day. The Bible is full of stories of choices, but sometimes we gloss over them, and think to ourselves: Adam and Eve, how dumb can you be! You kind of messed that one up for everyone! Or, on the flip side, it may appear obvious that Jesus was going to give it up, all of it, for all of us, and with that I don't mean to understate the gravity of those decisions, but I am relating sometimes how we think. Maybe you scream at David for betraying his servant and taking his wife, or grumble at Peter for denying his best friend. And you swear, I would never do that to *my* best friend. And, most definitely, I wouldn't try to steal someone else's wife or husband...

Yet we are all partakers of that flesh; we are Adam, we are Eve, we are Abraham, we are Rahab, we are David, we are Peter, we are even Manasseh. God made us flesh; he gave us free will; he gives us a choice. Just like the guy on the radio, who makes that choice every day to put on a brave face, a face of comfort, a face of happiness, even if it's not always what he feels inside, in the end, it is still our choice.

Going back to the choice of Manasseh, he repented and turned his back on his former self. Isn't that what baptism is all about it? God wants us to be like Jesus, and this leads to the choice to put off the old man — an easy phrase, that rolls off the tongue, but what it means, is making the choice to change our nature, to reject what we have been born into, and to choose something else. As Paul writes:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Rom 6:1-6).

In the end, just as it was in the beginning, it is our choice.

Nathan Sleeper (Glendale, AZ)

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel

(9) The Works Principle in Fruit Bearing Plant Life

I spent years growing up on my Grandfather's working farm. We grew vegetables, fruits, hay and chickens. The cows and horses were gone before I was born. While I didn't really appreciate the work when I was little, I have remembered it quite fondly for a number of decades since the final sweat was washed away. The farm had been in my family for quite a number of generations. Contrary to what my grandchildren may presume, we did have working tractors, bailing equipment, electricity and indoor plumbing. However, a great deal of the work was still done by hand. This was the timeframe when family farms were still dissolving into a completely different national commercial structure.

The three great harvest feasts

The former Egyptian slaves inherited an agricultural lifestyle in the promised land. The three great harvests were associated with three great feast weeks. The Feast of Unleavened Bread marked the barley and flax harvest. The Feast of Firstfruits (also known as the Feast of Weeks and Pentecost) identified the wheat harvest. The Feast of Tabernacles coincided with the vineyard harvest which was soon followed by the olive harvest. These three harvests/feasts parallel the three great judgments and harvests in the divine plan for creation. The first would be our Messiah. Death could not hold him. He was the first to be 'harvested' from creation to enjoy the divine nature of the Creator/Husbandman. At the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom our Messiah's family (expressed as his bride, his brothers and sisters as well as his children) will experience the second judgment and harvest event, fulfilling the laws of the Feast of the Firstfruits. Christ's wheat and tares parable (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43) depicts this stage in the divine plan, and is so appropriate because wheat was the specific harvest associated with the Feast of the

Firstfruits. This relationship is also confirmed by the fact that as Christ reconciled us at Passover (rising three days later) it was on Pentecost (Feast of the Firstfruits) that the 120 disciples were given the earnest of the promise (2Cor 5:5; Eph1:13-14) of immortalization in the divine powers of the Holy Spirit. That promise will be fulfilled in the antitypical Feast of the Firstfruits when the faithful inherit the divine nature at the second great harvest in the divine plan.

Fruit-bearing enlightened vs. Non-fruitbearing unenlightened

There are many, many avenues we could consider in the context of the enlightened being scripturally represented as fruit bearing plant life. The enlightened are represented as vineyards, fig trees, olive trees, wheat and barley. However, mankind in general is repeatedly represented as grass (Isa 40:6-8) and other vegetation that bears no fruit, such as briars and thorns (Num 33:55; Song 2:2; Psa 118:10-12, Nah 1:10). This theme extends subtly into many areas, such as the ram caught in a 'thicket' that Abraham offered instead of Isaac on Mt. Moriah, where Solomon's temple would eventually be erected. This ram represented Jesus of Nazareth, who would be caught in the 'thicket' of the Romans and divinely fruitless Jewish authorities in his sacrificial death. With our limited space let's examine this relationship between the enlightened and fruit bearing plantlife in the context of the seed.

The death and resurrection of the seed

Within the details of Paul's explanation of the resurrection to immortality, as opposed to the quite separate resurrection to judgment, the Apostle highlights how the lesson of the seed projects the principle and promise of resurrection. *"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain"* (1Cor 15:35-37). Paul defines the concept of the resurrection to immortality that was being questioned by twisted Greek logic, as the lesson of the seed. The seed has to die for it to be reborn as a fruit bearing plant. That seed of truth and hope is planted in the cursed dust of the earth, given the water of the word and nutrients from heaven and earth to rise above the dust, straining for the heavens and eventually bearing fruit. We are the dust of the earth, from which we were made (Gen 3:19). Just as the earth has to be plowed before it is planted, so the seed of divine truth cannot grow to maturity in an uncircumcised heart (Jer 4:3-4). The lesson of the seed is a creational declaration of the principle of resurrection, which the serpent philosophy of immortal sinfulness cannot comprehend.

The promise and the exhortation of the seed

The promise of the seed is the principle of a resurrection harvest. The exhortation of the seed is the necessity to bear fruit to the glory of the great Husbandman, our Creator. This lesson of the seed also contradicts the popular serpent philosophy, which is of salvation without a behavioral response. While salvation is certainly a gift, we still have to avoid the instinctive presumption that only faith is necessary. We cannot separate works from faith, as works are the expressions of a living faith....

just as fruitfulness is the natural expression of the seed that progresses through its growth stages, surviving all the challenges of its promised fruitfulness. Therefore we will be judged according to our faith as it has been demonstrated in works (Rev 22:12; 20:13; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 2Cor 5:10). Professed faith alone cannot save us. Without proven faith our judgment rejection is assured. It was exclusively the fourth seed category in Christ's parable of the sower that was acceptable. The seed eaten by birds off the unplowed ground, the seed burned in the shallow rocks, and the seed choked by weeds, all represented the enlightened, those who had received the seed of truth but were unfruitful and therefore divinely unacceptable. Isaiah's record of the song of his beloved depicted the vineyard of Yahweh that was carefully prepared but only yielded worthless wild grapes (Isa 5). Therefore that vineyard (Judah) would come to ruin. The creational exhortation of fruit bearing plant life is that we who have been made of dust and invested with the seed of divine truth must bear fruit to the glory of our heavenly Father... or perish forever. In fact, the promise of the seed has everything to do with the terms of divine accountability, which has been a contentious Christadelphian issue for over a century. The features of creation validate divine truths and principles.

There are a great many additional avenues for meditational consideration in this relationship between the creation features of plant life and divine truths, principles and exhortations. The primary point we are establishing is the greater measure of glory available to the enlightened, in witnessing how flawlessly our Creator prepared every microscopic and macroscopic feature of creation to project His truths and principles. Creation can be decoded with scripture to reveal how the physical and the spiritual are so perfectly matched in every layered and interdependent relationship. This is God manifestation. Everything fits together perfectly to reveal our Creator to the seeing eyes and hearing ears of the heart circumcised. Everything affects everything else.

In our next commentary we will examine how the scientific ignorance of this creational/spiritual relationship has endangered people's lives and degraded mankind's lifestyles for several thousand years.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Truth

The Greek word for truth, "aletheia", is derived from the verb "lanthano" which means 'to lie hidden' and is related to the Latin verb "lateo" from which we get 'latent'. The initial 'a' is a negative. So the word means 'unhidden', 'revealed'. It expresses the underlying reality that lies beneath the outward appearance, the inner meaning. A physical shape has no significance until we apply to it an idea, a concept, a word. A flat piece of wood, supported by wooden sticks is meaningless until we recognize a table — something to put things on. So the meaning of Scripture has no fundamental reality until we recognize the golden thread of God's purpose, consummated in Jesus.

This word "aletheia" has no verbal connection with our usual conception of truth as correct, accurate, verifiable by evidence. "Faith is... the evidence of things not seen" [Heb 11:1], and this truth is Jesus.

(Sheila Harris)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

My Sunday School Project ... 6 years and counting!

Background

In Sunday school, with the help of my teacher, Sis. Jeanette LeDuke, I have been creating web pages outlining my Bible beliefs.¹ In September 2011, Sis. Jeanette and I started our sixth year of work on the project. Our mission has been to develop an effective way of showing my friends what I believe, as well as clarifying my own understanding of first principles. I should explain that because there are no other young people my age in our Kitchener-Waterloo ecclesia, I have been the only student in this class!

We started the project by making a list of first principles such as baptism, the kingdom of God, etc., and creating a web page for each subject. Our goal has been to put things as clearly and simply as possible, and to include an interactive quiz with each page so users can test their knowledge. Each Bible verse that is quoted has a hyperlink which, when clicked, shows the verse in the bottom right frame. We are also working to give each Bible character a link to a short “bio” that shows in the bottom left frame.



Technical details

Because Sis. Jeanette is experienced in HTML (hypertext markup language), we decided to make each page from scratch, using only HTML code rather than web development software. We used a simple frame set consisting of four frames (as shown above), one for the list of topics, one for the explanation of the topic, one for a brief biography of each Bible character mentioned, and one for the Bible verse hyperlinks. Each Bible verse is a file, and we currently have almost 300 verse files. Great care was taken in naming each file for easy access. For some verses we have bolded part of the text for greater clarity.

The pages

It took about four years to create our topic pages. Topics included are *The Bible*, *The Nature of God*, *The Creation of the World*, *The Garden of Eden*, *Abraham*, *God's promises*, and many more. We spent a lot of time experimenting with the order of the topics to make a logical sequence for users to follow.



The Garden of Eden page is shown above. In addition to telling the story of what happened in Eden, it covers important principles such as the lie of the serpent, the curse, the promise of redemption, the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman. All of these principles are backed up by Bible verses. Naturally, many pages cover similar topics and we have linked related pages to each other. We have tried to make each page look consistent in terms of fonts, layouts, colors and illustrations. An interesting problem has come up along the way: the more pages we make, the more we think there should be! Our page on "God's Three Great Promises" was fairly brief. We didn't want to fill this page with information about Abraham and David, so we ended up making separate pages for each of these characters. This year, we are working on pages about Moses and Elijah.

The Quizzes

We spent almost a year making the interactive quizzes for each page. The purpose of these multiple choice quizzes is to give users a chance to test their knowledge and see if they really understand the contents of the page. It took a long time to think up the questions for each quiz. The right answers were easy, but it was hard to think up wrong answers! We wanted to lead the users in the right direction without being flippant or irreverent.

To make the quizzes, we obtained a Java application online and adapted it for



our purposes. In addition to learning a great deal about first principles, I also learned basic web page design, as well as how to program in HTML and Java!

Benefits

I have really enjoyed creating the web pages to display my beliefs in a unique way. I have found the project extremely interesting, both in terms of the Bible study involved and learning how to design the pages. I have been able to summarize major Bible topics, realizing best of all that this knowledge will last a lifetime. As time goes on, I will be able to build on my knowledge and have inspiration for new topics that will challenge me to further study of God's word.

Credits

We used a lot of different source material to put the various pages together. For the hyperlinked Bible verses we decided to use the King James Version, although we sometimes include other versions for clarity. We simply copied and pasted the verses from E-Sword² into an HTML verse template we had designed.

Christadelphian sources, in no particular order, include the following:

- *Exploring the Bible*, A basic step-by-step Bible study course designed for everyone, published by Christadelphian Scripture Study Service.
- *Key To The Understanding Of The Scriptures*, by H. P. Mansfield.
- *Exploring the Psalms*, by Mark Vincent.
- *The Christadelphian Instructor*, by Robert Roberts.
- *Preparing for Baptism*, published by the Christadelphian Bible Mission.
- *Faith Alive!*, October, 2007, Issue 88, "Teach us to pray", published by the Christadelphian Office.
- "Basic Bible Principles: The Second Coming of Jesus Christ", published by *The Testimony Magazine*.
- "Basic Bible Principles: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ", published by *The Testimony Magazine*.
- "Basic Bible Principles: The Kingdom of God", published by *The Testimony Magazine*.
- *Understand the Bible, Work it out for yourself*, by Tecwyn Morgan.

Emily Robinson (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON)

Project-based learning such as Emily has carried out is very rewarding. I would be pleased to learn about other Sunday school projects that students have done. Contact me at sundayschool@tidings.org.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Notes:

1. Here is the web address for Emily's Sunday school project: <http://www.execulink.com/~ledukes/ERSS/MainPage.html>. Try it out with your Sunday school students or as a CYC activity. Share it with others. It is easy to navigate and highly educational. It works with Internet Explorer and Chrome, but not with Firefox.
2. E-Sword² is free Bible study software available online at <http://www.e-sword.net/>.

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (8) Guideline Number 7: “...*children are an heritage of the LORD*”(Psa 127:3)

Choosing children

There is an old adage that claimed: *children cement a marriage*. Indeed children are a heritage from the LORD and it was His intended plan from the very beginning that the family would be the foundation of society. After creating Adam and Eve they are commissioned to, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth*” (Gen. 1:28 ESV). Before a couple gets married they should not fail to discuss how they feel about *being fruitful and multiplying*! Perhaps no other issue can affect the harmony of a marriage more than the decision whether or not to have children, and if so blessed, how to deal with them at every stage of life. Failing to carefully consider what children would mean to the marriage relationship could find the couple ending up with cement that crumbles rather than binds as the years go by.

In ages past the decision to have children was entirely left up to the natural course of things in a marriage. If blessed with offspring, mother and father dealt with it and raised them to adulthood whatever number came along. My father's mother, born in the 19th century, had twelve children, giving birth literally every couple of years until she was no longer fruitful. Having children or not for most of recorded history was not an option, it was a choice made for you by nature and the only way to avoid it was abstinence or physical limitation. In the overwhelmingly agrarian society that existed prior to the 20th century, a large number of children was an economic advantage in that they provided more labor for the farm. This increased labor pool, in effect, created the ability for increased output capable of feeding all. Also, in ages past, without society having any social net to protect the elderly from poverty, having children provided a haven for the aged family members. Needless to say all that has changed in our times.

A couple contemplating marriage should discuss thoroughly all the many issues regarding the role of children. It is wise not to make assumptions about what the other partner feels about the issue. Children profoundly change the marriage relationship in a myriad of ways. These can be difficult to deal with even if the couple believes that they are well suited to be parents. Many a marriage has floundered because the responsibilities associated with having and caring for children had never been fully appreciated. Some marriages have even failed because children could not be produced. This doesn't necessarily apply just to royalty requiring an heir apparent to the throne, but also to ordinary folks like us who can be terribly disappointed. So let's discuss some of the issues that need to be considered with respect to the role of children in a marriage relationship.

First, there is the question of whether or not the couple even wants children. Certainly this needs to be a joint decision and it should be one made prior to marriage, as it is not one easily revised once the couple is joined together in matrimony. Abraham and Sarah, as far as we can infer, had a very happy marriage for a very long time before they had any children. (Certainly Abraham regarded Sarah with great admiration as we can readily surmise from Gen 12:11, although they had no children at the time.) Priscilla and Aquila¹ do not appear to have had children. I think it is safe to assume they had a happy marriage, and their freedom to travel was probably entirely due to the fact that they had no close family ties to cause them concern. Thus they assisted greatly with planting the seed of the gospel. In many cases deciding not to have children is a wise choice depending on the ages and temperaments of potential partners. The ecclesia should respect those wishes without constant pestering. I cannot help but recalling that early in our marriage, when my wife and I were having some medical issues that were forestalling the ability for her to be pregnant — how hurtful some of the comments about when we were going to have children, when frankly it was no one's business but our own. It is wise that prospective marriage partners make a joint decision to have, or to not have, children prior to a wedding date. Furthermore, it is imperative that both partners fully agree that this decision can only be changed at some future time if both agree that the situation so warrants. Failing to do this and being presented with a surprise package clothed in diapers at some future time could possibly lead to resentment, and surely will end up with lack of trust.

Concerning children and their consequences

If a couple agrees that they want offspring then they should proceed to consider prior to the marriage some very important questions regarding children, such as:

- When to have children?
- How many may be desired?
- Have they given some serious thought to the financial implications of having children?
- Given consideration on how to guide and discipline² children?
- Considered how to share responsibilities in child rearing?
- What to do if it turns out to be impossible to have children?

The above list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but simply to serve as a guideline for some of the key issues I had found necessary to bear in mind, relative to my own personal experience and from time to time in counseling others.

Let us consider these points in turn. The simple, but hopefully an astute answer to points a) through c) above is: *When a couple can afford it!* But this isn't necessarily reality, as we shall soon see. The average cost to raise a child born in 2010 to the age of eighteen (in 2028) in the United States is \$226,920 according to U.S. Department of Agriculture figures.³ This of course is an average for the whole nation and varies somewhat geographically. To get a figure fine-tuned to your geographic location go to the calculator on the website in reference no. 3 below.⁴ The average cost figures for Canada are somewhat lower at \$182,190,⁵ but this is offset somewhat by the fact that average income is also lower there than in the United

States. Startlingly, the numbers from the United Kingdom are considerably higher than on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. The latest data in the United Kingdom indicate a cost equivalent to \$316, 962⁶ to raise a child from birth to twenty-one years old. The amount actually spent per child depends on total household income, simply because the more the parents earn the more the expectations. Thus a lower income family might spend less on bringing a child up to the age of eighteen, but the total percentage of their actual disposable income will unfortunately be higher, making a child even more difficult to afford. Since the North American cutoff age is eighteen in all these reports none of them consider the cost of funding in whole, or in part, either a college education or a wedding! Where does that leave us? When I told my mother one time, many years ago, that we would have children when we could afford it she wisely said to me that if that were the case then probably no one except the ultra-rich would ever have kids! There is a great deal of truth in that statement, but it is also true that an awareness of the actual costs should be abundantly clear, and that a married couple must be willing to make sacrifices in order to be good parents. Activities we did in the past, things we purchased, levels of comfort we previously took for granted, and vacations we formerly took and could easily afford (among other things) before having children, must of necessity be eliminated or greatly altered. Anyone contemplating having children needs to be aware of being willing to make such sacrifices without regret or there will surely be trouble lying ahead in the marriage. The Scriptural admonition of the Apostle Paul is particularly relevant when one reflects on how parents should willingly sacrifice for their children: “...I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children” (2Cor 12:14 ESV).

The discipline of children

Aside from financial disagreements the next most critical issue that leads to serious conflicts in a marriage revolve around exactly how to discipline children. If the married couple does not have an agreed consistent plan for raising children, it not only will affect their own personal relationship, but also can cause undue harm to their children that will linger into their adult years. The Bible gives lots of advice on how to raise children, but this present essay will only be able to touch on them briefly. Nevertheless, some discussion is warranted here about disciplining children especially in the context of how it can affect marriage harmony.

Invariably we are conditioned by the culture in which we were raised. If our parents were strict disciplinarians, including spanking and other forms of physical punishment, then we will either follow the same pattern or reject it completely, sometimes vehemently so. Rarely does one follow some middle course. Often faithful Bible students will insist that Scriptures teach strict discipline for children that includes corporal punishment and the verse usually quoted to justify this is, “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (Prov 13:24 ESV).⁷ If this is a couple’s idea of discipline then I ask you to think again. Compare the Proverbs verse just quoted with Psa 23:4 (ESV): “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*” Now how can a rod and

staff comfort if it is an instrument of beating. Actually, the shepherd's rod and staff was never used to beat the sheep. There is a sheep farm near us and I have witnessed firsthand how the shepherd uses the rod to prod the sheep in the right direction when he wants to round them up into a pen. The rod and staff with the crook at the end are also used to extricate an animal, if he gets into trouble with a gopher hole or other obstacle that might entrap them. Thus, what Scriptures had in mind for disciplining a child is of a similar nature, i.e. firm discipline to nudge them in the right direction, but without any physical harm being used. To lend some further weight to this viewpoint we should also consider the words of the Apostle Paul to the ecclesias at Ephesus and Colossae: *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"* (Eph.6: 4 ESV) and *"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged"* (Col 3:20:21 ESV).

Also the State needs to be considered in deciding how we discipline our children. In 1979 Sweden outlawed spanking and beating of children in any form, backed up with prison terms for those who are repeated offenders. Since Sweden passed this legislation 30 other nations have followed suit through 2011⁸, including Israel (in 2000), which is governed by a fairly orthodox religious leadership who are quite conversant with the Old Testament Scriptures. Comparing the list of 31 nations having passed such child protective legislation with the 2010 ALS Diary finds that currently 20 of those countries have established Christadelphian Ecclesias and/or organized missionary efforts with brethren and sisters in residence. In the United States and Canada such legislation has not been passed, but there are many forces pushing for it to be done. In Canada, though specific parliamentary law is lacking, nevertheless the Canadian Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that a child could only be subject to reasonable corporal punishment by a parent or guardian if it can be shown that the child would benefit from that action. But the court also added that this did not apply to children younger than two or older than 12 years old where ordinary assault and battery laws would apply. The bottom line is that parents in the future who want to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, coupled with firm discipline, needs to think of more creative ways to impress the child with the need for correct behavior or they may well find themselves disobeying the child protective laws. (Ideas on how to do this will be discussed, Lord willing, in a subsequent article). I for one applaud this trend towards ending corporal punishment of children — I have observed that it often ends up teaching them that physical violence is the way to resolve disagreements rather than by *reasoning together*.

I assume that no one wants to bring up what is colloquially call a "spoiled brat" and to avoid this I suggest that discipline needs to be firm BUT loving. Both parents need to agree on the bounds of what is acceptable, and what is not, and this will be an ongoing process over the course of their married life. The thing that needs to be considered at the beginning, is that the couple will set themselves the task of discussing disciplinary measures as they arise and agreeing to not argue this out in front of the child. The strongest and best discipline parents can give a child is in

the example of the honest, caring, and considerate love that is visibly demonstrated every day in the way their mother and father treat each other! (*"The righteous who walks in his integrity — blessed are his children after him"* (Prov 20:7 ESV)).

(To be continued)

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. Priscilla and Aquila — see: Acts 18, Rom 16, 1Cor 16 and 2Tim 4.
2. So there is no doubt what I mean by "discipline" i.e., training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character (Merriam-Webster dictionary).
3. USDA Report Release No. 0241.11, Washington, June 9, 2011.
4. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/calculatorintro.htm>
5. <http://canadianfinanceblog.com/>
6. Manchester Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news>. The British data includes 3 more years through 21 years of age, but likewise excludes cost of any private education. Hence the figures there are roughly comparable to North America.
7. This verse is often cited in conjunction with Prov 19:18 which doesn't explicitly state for the child to be beaten with a rod. Also Prov 10:13 is also sometimes cited but this verse does not refer to children..
8. <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/pdfs/reports/GlobalReport2011.pdf>. This report cites 31 nations have so far passed laws outlawing any form of corporal punishment of a child in the home, school or even if they are incarcerated and 22 additional nations are in the process of considering such legislation.

Forgiveness (6)

We've established that God has built into us the means to help us change our hearts from unforgiving to forgiving, if we have the "want to". This transforming ability is designed into our brains, ready for us, even now. Typically, however, we end up praying to God to change our heart, wishing to move on, but not experiencing the change. Did God answer "No"? Or, is there more to be done? We may think that God will miraculously give us amnesia regarding the terrible infraction against us and we will find immediate release from this death-grip of "unforgiveness". But is that how it actually works?

Remember from article #4 that forgiveness is a process. It's more like taking off a garment and putting on another, then taking off a garment, and putting on another. It's not a simple case of amnesia at all. The good news about the process is that just maybe, there's something crucial to be learned in what we might see as a tedious process. That might be why God doesn't grant an immediate and instantaneous release. Maybe spiritual health comes in the process more than the result.

The 24 activities of forgiveness presented in this article fall into four categories:

- 1) Activities to uncover our anger.
- 2) Activities to help us decide to forgive.
- 3) Activities to help us process our forgiveness.
- 4) Activities to release us from emotional pain.

To see the full list please go to the www.tidings.org website. This is not a "To do" list starting from the first activity and proceeding methodically down the list.

There are parts of this that feed together and some you return to over and over. The aim of this article is to broaden the awareness of our participation in this process. There is much that can be done.

Activities to uncover our anger

In order to forgive we need to be willing to examine the anger we have as a result of someone's unfairness to us. There are questions we will need to ask ourselves, and answer as honestly as we can without fear of condemnation, especially *self*-condemnation. The questions are probing and revealing and most helpful if we allow them to do their work. We may have hidden the truths about our hurt and anger under layers of rationalizations and emotional "stuff". After all, we have been taught that it's "sinful to carry anger". Some of the layers that are hiding the truth of our anger are about trying to live the Truth without actually engaging in truth. Because of our fear of sin we create shortcuts. Here are a few common ones. There are more that we can and do create, but these are the highlights:

- **DENIAL:** at first a healthy protection, but if not addressed, it can turn into an obstacle.
- **SUPPRESSION:** pushing thoughts about the event from consciousness; a false forgetting.
- **REPRESSION:** usually for major abuses; the brain can block things for you.
- **DISPLACEMENT:** transfers the anger to something or someone else, often in families; for example, anger at your father could transfer to anger at your husband.
- **REGRESSION:** engaging in behavior that is considered understandable in a child but is inappropriate for an adult.

Here are some questions to assist us in exploring and opening up our denial, suppression, repression, displacement, and regression. How have we avoided dealing with anger? Have we faced our anger? Am I afraid to expose my shame or guilt (my part in it)? Has our anger affected our faith? My health? Our prayers? Have I been obsessed with the injury or the offender? Do we compare our situation with that of the offender? (Sometimes we see the offender as leading a "charmed" life and we are saddled with all the suffering.) Has the injury caused a permanent change in my life? (Those trying to forgive before they have accepted and grieved permanent losses may find that they need to forgive again.) Has the injury changed our outlook on life?

Regarding simple injuries to us at the hand of another, this section could be very easy to work with and through. But in the course of our lives there will be times we find we are seething with anger, and are not able to appropriately focus on it to get to who or how to forgive. Sometimes we can't even recognize that there's a deficit that forgiving would fill.

Activities to help us decide to forgive

This is not too different from when we decided to get baptized. Something, an inciting awareness, prompted us to take the step. The reason for baptism could have been a misfortune that came upon us and we could see the Truth in contrast;

or maybe we realized Jesus is coming back soon and we didn't want to miss out. Such awakenings or combinations help push us along towards a good direction. Correspondingly, if we have discovered or recognized our anger, here are some ideas that could help push us along:

- 1) Draw from a change of heart, a "conversion", or new insights revealing that what we have been doing isn't working.
- 2) Entertain the thought that forgiveness is the solution.
- 3) Make a commitment to God to forgive the offender.

Our previous article talked about brokenness. An unforgiving heart is bad for our health! If we allow ourselves to feel the brokenness and how unsatisfactory the current situation is, we will be driven to the next activities. For most of us, making a commitment to change helps us actually move toward accomplishing change, even changing our minds. An excellent way to commit is to write it down on a piece of paper: "On (today) I commit to forgive _____". Writing it down is amazingly helpful!

Activities to help us process our Forgiveness

It would be easy to think that the job is done now, but on difficult forgiveness issues the work starts now. Certainly some of the activities would be to ask God to assist, making sure we really want to forgive. Another powerful idea is to pray for the offender, making sure to use their name. Let's now explore another major activity: "reframing".

Reframing is changing our perspective through role-taking. We reframe when we view the wrongdoer in context. Reframing is a Biblical concept. We are asked to view things differently from their natural context. To see ourselves as God sees us, we need to look through the frame of Scripture. To see other people, it's the same. The incidents in our lives, good and bad, are better viewed in the frame of Scripture. It's just like looking at a picture in a frame. The frame tells you what to notice. God's frame will tell you to notice different things.

Here are some examples: Matt 5:11-12 speaks of persecution but it reframes it to joy and reward. James 1:2-4 speaks of trials but reframes them to joy, patience, and perfection. 1Cor 15:54-57 speaks of death but reframes it to victory.

Gen 50:17-21 is a prime example of reframing. In verse 17 Joseph's brothers are imploring Joseph to forgive them for the despicable way they treated him. How does Joseph forgive them? Joseph says, *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"* (vs. 20). Joseph is reframing the smaller picture of betrayal, near-murder, and rejection to a bigger picture of the salvation of a family from starvation and ruin. Did Joseph figure this out as the events were happening? It took years and much suffering as the reframing process developed in his understanding, but reframing was the way he was able to forgive.

Understanding the forces that drive offenders is an important step in the reframing and forgiveness process. Here are some questions to help us reframe our perception of our offender:

- 1) What was it like for the offender as they were growing up?
- 2) What was it like for the offender at the time of the offense? (Not condoning, just understanding.)
- 3) Can we see them as a member of the human community or ecclesia?
- 4) Are we able to tell the story of our relationship in a broader sense than the offence? (What were they like in good times? Was it all bad? Did the person ever show good judgment?) Sometimes looking through old photo albums will help broaden our view beyond the offence.

The poet, Longfellow, wrote: "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each person's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility." Seeking empathy and compassion toward the offender goes hand in hand with reframing.

Another activity is to release our thoughts from the injury for longer blocks of time. An injury can become an obsession, or worse yet, our identity.

Bearing and accepting the pain releases you to heal. Given a serious injury, our bodies go into shock; a way of numbing and protecting us from the pain. However, being in shock is medically dangerous and definitely not a permanent solution. Accepting pain is to stop hiding from it. We discover that we can handle the pain, and then it lessens. As we become stronger we don't have to transfer the pain to someone else. Accepting pain is a gift to those around us who have been uninvolved in the incident of hurt.

As this process continues we can do a few other activities. One is to speak to others in a kindly manner about the person who has done us an injustice; even more, to give a moral gift to the offender. In 2006 some Amish families experienced the horrible tragedy of a man killing five young girls. The community of the murdered girls was able to offer meals and financial aid to the widow of the killer, who had committed suicide after the shootings. It's possible our offender has since died and then what can we do? It may be just to put their picture back up in our house or to visit their grave. The gift we decide upon will benefit us more than anyone else.

Activities to release us from emotional pain

This last section helps provide us with the ability to find meaning in the suffering and forgiveness process. It is well documented that many survivors of the concentration camps looked for a higher meaning in their suffering, and those who found it, fared better, at least emotionally, than those who lost hope. Another useful perspective-changer is to realize that we need God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others, too; and that God has indeed, amply forgiven us.

We know there is strength in having partners in faith, in supportive ecclesias and with understanding family members. In our suffering there is also a community of like-sufferers. We will discover that we are not alone in this.

We can realize that we may have a new purpose in life because of our injury. Certainly in the earlier example of Joseph and his brothers the purpose of rescuing his family from famine came through loud and clear to him.

A final activity in this section, as we do our forgiveness work, is for us to become more and more aware of the decreased negative effect and the increased positive effect that this important work creates in our lives. This applies particularly to our experience of the offender but also to our own internal emotional release.

Interestingly, if you read books on forgiveness the activities we've discussed show up in all sorts of ways. For example, if you were to take Eph 4:31-32 you can find seven of these activities right there. Be sure to get the whole list from the website. These activities are not added burdens to our lives but actually burden-lifters. Let's enjoy the progress.

Seven steps towards forgiveness

Sis. Robyn Henry of Australia lists what she calls seven steps to move towards forgiveness. Sis. Henry's wording is very helpful and serves as a refreshing conclusion to this discussion:

- 1) Forget about the matter some of the time.
- 2) Do not actively wish the other person harm.
- 3) Let go of the idea that your suffering is touching the other human being or teaching them a lesson.
- 4) Come into the present. Think more about your feelings and needs and those of others close to you.
- 5) Feel that you can be patient with yourself.
- 6) Pray — be honest with God.
- 7) You cannot do it by yourself!

Next: Forgiveness as a key to healing communities.

David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Note that the Minute Meditation this month is on the same theme, quite by coincidence!

Examining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Part 3

Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith was not without opposition from within the newly formed Mormon church. His brother, Hyrum, also a "witness" of the Book of Mormon, began to baptize and confirm new members. The same was true of Oliver Cowdery. The two men had attempted to exercise independent authority. Joseph Smith's response was swift he proclaimed himself a prophet with exclusive communications with the Almighty Father and Jesus Christ.

At this time Joseph Smith dispatched Oliver Cowdery to Missouri in search of what he was convinced had to be the site of the New Jerusalem. The location of Independence was chosen and later abandoned by the church. The second part of Cowdery's mission was to expand the church membership, specifically targeting the American Indians. A man by the name of Sidney Rigdon¹, a minister of the "Disciples of Christ" church made the acquaintance of Oliver Cowdery at

this time. As a result of being converted, Rigdon and his congregation joined the Mormons, doubling the size of the church membership. Smith would also dictate another “lost” book of Enoch, stating that the biblical figure had established a city so righteous that God had taken it to heaven.

Pressure and opposition continued to grow in New York State so Joseph Smith told the congregation that the saints must relocate to Kirkland, Ohio. He promised Rigdon, now second in charge, that the executive body would receive “spiritual gifts” when they arrived. During the first days in Kirkland, and by his own authority, Smith “endowed” his top followers with the Melchizedek priesthood. He declared that while still in New York, the apostles Peter, James, and John had appeared to him shortly after John the Baptist and conferred the high priesthood upon him. The Aaronic priesthood gave the authority to baptize, but only those brethren with the Melchizedek authority could perform “higher” ceremonies like marriage. This is because marriage in the Mormon church includes a sealing ceremony after the vows are exchanged, binding the couple for “time and eternity”. So “till death do us part” is no longer applicable. Procreation continues in the new kingdom for worthy couples. This ceremony can only be held in a Mormon temple. It is signified at the time of its initiation with the couple kneeling and facing each other, with a mirror behind each person. The mirrors reflect into each other signifying eternity.

Joseph Smith tried to establish the church in Missouri but bitter opposition prevented his endeavours. Also, the governor’s office did not offer him their cooperation or support. Smith returned to Ohio to oversee the building of the Kirkland Temple. He set up a church bank to fund the project, coercing monies from the followers by offering them bank notes which they bought as a religious duty. At the 1836 dedication of the temple, the new church was deeply in debt. Many of the members abandoned Smith because of pressure from creditors and the “prophet” was arrested and charged with bank fraud.

Joseph Smith then fled by night to Missouri. He and his followers established the town of Far West. There was much anti-Mormon sentiment throughout the state which led to mob attacks and acts of violence by vigilantes. The Mormons would then decide to become more militant, “establishing the faith by the sword”, in the words of Joseph Smith. The result of this policy would lead to war with the state militia in the Battle of Crooked Creek after a Mormon initiated attack. The governor then ordered the extermination of all Mormons, citing them as a threat to the security of the American people. Before the order was issued however, more mob attacks rendered eighteen Mormons killed. The church surrendered and the war ended. Joseph Smith was imprisoned awaiting trial for treason along with Sidney Rigdon and other prominent leader of the group. The relationship between the two men became strained, creating a vacuum within which Brigham Young rose to prominence by defending Smith. All escaped custody on the way to trial and fled to Illinois where they then encouraged the membership to settle. Smith sent Rigdon and Young to Europe where they gained many converts, mainly the poor who then emigrated to the United States. A few wealthy converts joined as well. One of renown was Dr. John Bennett who was Illinois’ quartermaster. Using his influence and connections he obtained a charter for the new found city

of Nauvoo (Hebrew meaning “to be beautiful”). Joseph Smith also gained a legal ruling preventing his extradition to Missouri. He had established the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, still in situ today. In Nauvoo, Smith instituted baptisms for the dead and the building of the temple began. For the women he established the Relief Society wherein the sisterhood would be of service to the congregation. He promised them the keys of heaven for their efforts.

In 1843 Smith petitioned the US congress to declare Nauvoo an independent territory with the privilege of calling on federal troops in the event of needful defence. He also lobbied Presidential Candidates from all parties asking for their pledge to protect Mormons. When they would not commit he announced his own candidacy. He was actively practising polygamy at this time as were many followers. He had had a “revelation” that in the kingdom righteous men would have many wives in order to propagate new earths, given as a reward to the faithful by God himself.

In March of 1844 Smith organized the “Council of Fifty”, to determine which laws should and should not be obeyed by Mormons. He also designated that more settlements be established in north and south western states which were, at the time, beyond government rule. This was a foreshadowing of world government; a creating of a theocracy to usher in the Millennial kingdom age. The Millennial Monarchy would see Joseph Smith as King, Priest, and Prophet. This would be enacted by the Council of Fifty.

Later that spring a serious conflict developed between Smith and about six of his leading counterparts. They claimed that Smith had proposed marriage to their wives. They also differed in their economic views for the city of Nauvoo and how it should be managed. Smith ex-communicated them as he thought they were plotting against his life. They began a competing church and secured indictments against him for polygamy and other crimes. The newspaper published this, calling for church reform. It declared Smith’s “Doctrine of Many Gods” as apostate. Indeed, Joseph Smith believed, as do Mormons today, that the Heavenly Father was once a man; mortal upon the earth, but who, through his acquisition of knowledge, rose to the situation of a Deity which he is today. It is thought that all men can achieve this if they live according to Mormon doctrine without wavering. Acceptance of the “divinely appointed” dictates of the current “prophet” ensures this.

There are three degrees of glory in the after-life; the celestial (the highest) the terrestrial (2nd) and the telestial (3rd). After this there is only outer darkness. It is only in the celestial kingdom that one can obtain “God” status. All designations are subject to the judgement of Christ. Entrance to the celestial kingdom is only for those married and sealed in a temple.

Smith had the Nauvoo newspaper destroyed after its articles on him appeared. This incited a riot by the non-Mormons, and Smith declared martial law. He activated the Mormon militia, causing Illinois to mobilize a small group of its own militia. The governor threatened to bring in more soldiers, and Smith fled across the Mississippi River. He returned and surrendered to the state. He was jailed for inciting a riot, but while incarcerated the charges escalated to treason against Illinois. On June 27, 1844 an angry mob stormed the jail. Joseph Smith and his

brother Hyrum were both shot. Hyrum died instantly. Trying to escape through a window, the “prophet” fell to his death after taking many bullets to his body. As he fell he was quoted as crying, “O Lord My God!”

After Joseph Smith

The present day Mormon church has become a huge building project with temples increasing in number globally. It is the writer’s opinion that the fallacy that is the Mormon church is evident, in that over three thousand of Joseph Smith’s “revelations” have either been abandoned or changed since his death. The church has its own publishing company under the name of Deseret Press, its own Children’s Aid Society to ensure Mormon placement of LDS orphans, farms and food warehouses, along with its own Welfare Program. It is one of the fastest growing and most prosperous churches in the world today.

A collection of Joseph Smith’s revelations comprise the publication known as the “Doctrine and Covenants”, which also contains the “Word of Wisdom. “ An example of one of its statements is that hot drinks are not for the body. Smith interpreted this to mean coffee and tea. Therefore Mormons do not partake of these. If they are caught, it is cause for a bishop to revoke a temple recommendation — a slip of paper issued and shown at the temple doors that allows a worthy Mormon entrance. One cannot enter into the celestial kingdom if, at the time of their death, you do not have a temple recommendation slip.

The Mormons also believe that others may have the gift of being a seer. A “patriarchal blessing” is given by a designated member of the church. He is predictably called a patriarch. There is one for each region or “stake”. A stake is a group of “wards” in an area. A ward is a single congregation. The patriarch tells about a member’s life; what has been, and what is to come, supposedly. By gift of divine inspiration they are able to know these things.

All Mormon males aged nineteen are expected, but not forced, to go on a two year mission for the church at their own expense. Therefore, along with tithing ten percent of any and all earnings, boys save from an early age for their mission. They are sent out in twos all over the world to spread the doctrine of Joseph Smith. They are told what to wear, how to wear their hair, what curfew they must abide by, and what time to rise in the morning. Non-compliance with the rules can result in the missionary being sent home to sure disgrace and whispers. One can see the pressure to conform throughout the church. It is a form of control by which children are indoctrinated and trained.

Many of the members of the church follow blindly not knowing the deeper doctrines of the church, such as mentioned in this article. They are told not to question that which is divinely appointed. I was excommunicated in 1996 because I would not comply with what I saw as inaccurate hypocrisy. When I was a Mormon, I was taught that no one had done more for the salvation of mankind than Joseph Smith, save Jesus Christ himself. I say, Outrageous!

The main LDS church no longer sanctions polygamy in this life, but believes it to be a part of the next. The reason is that the laws of the land are now something to

be obeyed. Members are taught to obey kings, magistrates, etc. They are not above political ambition as can be clearly seen with the current Republican Presidential Nominee being a Mormon.

Mary St.Onge (Hamilton Book Rd, ON)

Note: this article follows after previous ones in the series, January and February 2012, but was deferred by the press of other series.

Notes:

1. Sidney Rigdon was one of those who was discussed by John Thomas in his contacts with the Mormons in the 1850's: see "John Thomas, His Friends and His Faith", Chapter 11.

9-11-01

It was, in many ways, a typical start to a working Tuesday. The sky was blue, it was a beautiful late summer morning and everything appeared to be business as usual. On this busy, bustling day in a city so large its citizens often think of it as the center of the universe, the day began as so many others before it. The early morning rituals of newspapers and coffees, breakfasts on the run and finding seats on one of the world's busiest commuter transit systems would, by day's end, witness events that would leave an impact that still reverberates to this day.

Two days earlier, however, an incident as apparently trivial as an 'accidental' moment of thoughtlessness triggered another event which few would ever see, let alone appreciate. You see, a lady (we'll call her Abby) was coming down her basement stairs and slipped on a hairbrush someone in her household had inadvertently left there. The resultant fall was so hard that she fractured her ankle. The trip back from the hospital emergency was on crutches, wearing a cast. She was told to keep off her feet for several days. The angry frustration toward the unknown family culprit only grew as she had to miss her important business appointment at 9:30 a.m. on the 11th.

That same day, someone else who normally was never late for work, stopped off for a coffee but headed back home in apparent need of something forgotten. She never returned to the same work place again.

Not long after this, a third lady was ordered off the train she was taking to work, only to emerge outdoors to watch the horrific events that were unfolding in the skyline above.

That morning, a photocopy technician awoke knowing that his workload was going to be a light one that day. He decided to take a sick day. Just as he was calling his boss, he was told to immediately turn on the TV and watch what was happening to the building where he was scheduled to work.

Somewhere, over the skies to the north in Canada, American air traffic was diverted to its airports for emergency landings. A scared mother and wife was told that her pilot husband would not be able to return to her until it was safe to do so. North America was gripped in shock and fear. The days of security of homeland protection from air attack had now come to an end.

2,977 victims' lives were claimed that fateful day, 11 years ago, but one whose story has not completely been told. It has been estimated that up to 19,000 people were in the Twin Towers that morning on September 11th, 2001 and that, at any given time, 100,000 could have been working at the World Trade Center. What the world saw that eventful day cannot be diminished as to its horror, fear and sadness. Many suffered loss of life while others still grieve the victims they loved. There, but for the Grace of God, would we have gone, the way of all flesh...and how tragic that mankind still dies in brutal, horrific, wasteful and unnecessary circumstances. But, let mankind take heed of this: That although this attack was not diverted, our God saw fit to have allowed for the rescue and evacuation of 1,000s upon 1,000s from this tragedy! May the many survivors praise Him for this!

...and, especially for us, let the unknown story of those mentioned above still elicit a spark of encouragement for them who are His, called according to His purpose. For, you see, these are the first-hand accounts of our sisters and brothers in Christ who had no way of knowing beforehand the events that were to take place, and were oblivious to the shadow of the unforeseen Hand of Providence in their lives. Many are the plans in the minds of men, but it's God who will direct as He sees fit. What to most who have observed this event in history would consider barely a footnote, we see as the invisible hand behind the scenes protecting and guiding us in His love. He is still at work in our lives, brethren and sisters, watching over us even when we're not aware. Let this provoke our hearts to witness evermore, so to the fact that our God is an Awesome God, Who is able to perform more than we ask or think of Him.

Let this be an opportunity to be renewed in thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for His steadfast love, no matter the circumstances, and put in perspective what we consider to be of such importance in our fellowship. Let us look for Him in each day's journey and rejoice in another day of life. He hasn't lost sight of us and it is our solemn duty to remind each other that God is active and wants to be part of our lives. He tells us that He will be found of those who seek for Him with all their hearts. Let us give thanks for all He has given and continues to give.

Much has happened since that day, 11 years ago: the collapse of governments, the instability of western economies, the capture and execution of 9/11's master-mind, the escalation of anti-Israeli sentiments. We are on the verge of Christ's return. Let us further be impressed with the need to keep our garments clean, to witness to this ever-dying world of our God, who has done marvelous things for us, and to encourage our brethren and sisters that our King will come!

Post Script: The first time this talk was given, a visiting seminar student in the audience related afterwards, that he had been living in New York during the time of the destruction of the WTC. He had planned a visit to the towers the day of the bombing, but was told by his employer that he couldn't get the time off until the week after. Originally from Mexico, he moved to Toronto several years after this incident, came to our "Learn to Read the Bible" seminars and within a few months of this exhortation was baptized.

Peter Wisniowski (Church Street Ecclesia, Toronto, ON)

A Christadelphian Visits Qatar

Through a combination of circumstances, the author found himself in Qatar. Following are his observations and matters learned from discussions there.

As a long-time resident of Jamaica, I found articles in recent issues of *The Tidings* on Islam to be interesting and, in some cases, enlightening. As I am sure most readers know, there are several former Muslims in many of the Caribbean ecclesias, and even a few in North American ecclesias.

I found the review very helpful during a visit to the Sunni/Wahhabi Gulf state of Qatar. Within the Manhattan-like skyline and among the three million autos on the streets of the capital, Doha, I shared fellowship with a Christadelphian who is a Qatari national and is in the service of His Eminence Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabar Al Thani, a member of the royal family. Qatar is an absolute monarchy under Shari'a law. As a result there is no problem of theft. We experienced this for ourselves as we left an expensive camera (not mine) in a busy restaurant. The manager later told us that no one dare touch it, as if found with it, he would lose his right hand (left if left-handed).

I would like to add a few things which I learned about Islam while in Qatar as a rather late postscript to the series in *The Tidings*.

A multitude of wives

Muhammad said, "There is no celibacy in Islam", and for healthy males marriage is obligatory. Everybody "knows" that Muslims can have up to four wives simultaneously, as well as concubines. This is custom, but it is not law. Many wealthy Qataris (and today there are thousands of them, due to our thirst for fuel) have many more than four, as well as concubines, mainly obtained from poor non-Muslim societies. This is permissible because Mohammad had at least twelve wives, plus an unknown number of slave girls. After his first wife died, he had a rather bizarre habit of marrying as many widows of his dead enemies as he could get inside his house in Medina.

The attire of the women

It is often suggested in the west that veiling of women is Arab custom and not original Islamic law. This is not so. The Quran lists those who are allowed to look on a "believing Muslim woman" unveiled. I asked why so many concubines went around, even in the market, unveiled, and in the home much less than unveiled. I was told that they were "unbelieving women". Some of the concubines had stunningly beautiful, gentle faces, and wonderful eyes.

It seemed to me that many wealthy Qataris were trying to show off and impress. I noticed, especially in upper class circles, beneath the *chadoors* and *burkas* an almost incredible collection of jewelry on the women.

I was also amazed at the fantastic amounts of gold, diamonds and precious jewels on display in the open-air souks (markets), a certain temptation to thieves. But then I was reminded again that there is Shari'a law! Another thing did surprise

me a little. However many wives and girls a man had, they seemed happy, holding hands in public, and laughing naturally. There seemed to be, at least on the surface, little of the jealousy that marred the life of Jacob through his multiple partners.

Religious controversies

I acquired many insights into Muslim theology, and some debates on theological issues proved in discussion to be very close to unresolved and non-fundamental issues that have troubled the Christadelphians brotherhood for 150 years and more. One of the most bitter in Islam is the doctrine of contamination and guilt by association. Should we expel sinners from the elect in order to maintain the “purity of the truth” (the same phrases appear regularly!). Must we “come out and be separate” in every aspect of life and worship, and use the church (or mosque) as a road block rather than a gate to the sheepfold? Or does it mean a *moral* separation from “the world” and its temptations to sin, while still living in it? Muslims, like Christians, have disputed over this for centuries.

Because the faithful who are destined to Paradise must be kept pure and separate, the Kharijites withdrew from other Shi’ites, and have a fellowship restricted to the just and the holy. On the other hand the Mu’tazila believe that a sinner is neither a believer nor an unbeliever and that only Allah (God) can decide what his fate will be.

Muslim Statement of Faith

The Muslims’ principal statement of faith, the Creed of al-Ash’ari, is more dogmatic than I imagined on three points that rarely emerged in private discussions. It commits believers to:

- After death, the “supernatural beings” Munkar and Nakir “interrogate the dead in their tombs”. Since one Muslim dies every two seconds, the two beings are kept very busy or there is a heavy backlog (Clause 45).¹
- A very supernatural Shatan (Satan). “Satan whispers to people, makes them doubt and makes them mad” (Clause 51).
- An extraordinarily ‘high’ concept of the absolute sovereignty of God that makes even an arch-Calvinist seem liberal. A person has no power to do anything or not do anything. “There is no creator except God. The evil actions of human beings are created by God. The good works of human beings are created by God. Human beings are not able to create anything” (Clause 16).

Really, how extreme can human beings become?

Purity of the faith

Discussion with Sahhabis was fascinating to me because they constantly emphasize the need to “return to the original purity of the word of Allah and original Islam”, and they talk about “the pioneers” (that’s the term they use). To them, going back to the original means ever harsher and harsher laws and punishments for apostasy. Pulling up the weeds and attacking Shatan (Satan, Americans and Europeans ²) is the main occupation of most Wahhabi Imams.

The endless feuding between Qadarites and Jbrites over pre-destination and free-will, and the eternal arguments between Hanbalites and Sufis over amendments to the fifty or so clauses in the Constitution of Medina and the Sunni statement of faith and styles of worship (whether to worship in solemnity and reverence or with joy and jubilation), are both extraordinary close parallels to disputes “to no profit” among ourselves. (Not so long ago, in the UK, I visited an ecclesia only to find that it was in the “no organs fellowship” about which I was totally ignorant.)

An Islamic campaign

An interesting final note is in regard to the Muslims handing out tracts in the various shopping malls. They seemed quite knowledgeable about the problems in the various Christian denominations and were ready to discuss on various topics. I was struck with their joyful and humble attitude that we could take as an example to ourselves. Somehow they seemed to know about Christadelphians and noted that “you can’t win unless you’re united”. Where did they get that from?

Alan Eyre (Oxford, UK)

Notes:

1. It must be acknowledged that it is a similar conceptual problem which led many early Christadelphians, and some today, to envisage a forty year period for “the quick and the dead” to be judged in Sinai in “the Last Day”.
2. Unlike the Sunnis, many Shi’ites conceptualize Satan much as we do. The Americans are Satan, and not just the agents of a supernatural Satan.

Affliction in God’s Plan

Though heaven and earth appear to be against us, let us not falter for a single moment in our confidence in God. That we are defamed, ill-treated, impoverished, bereaved, or laid low by disease is no evidence that God’s lovingkindness has forsaken us.

Affliction does not exclude divine favor. This truth is enforced throughout the Word.

Look at the demonstration afforded by the history of the apostle Paul alone. Neither his faithfulness nor Christ’s love for him admit of question. “I have fought a good fight” (2Tim 4:7) was the apostle’s last confession. And can it be denied?

“In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night have I been in the deep, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness... reviled, defamed, made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things” (2Cor 11:23-27; 1Cor 4:13).

With such an experience in view, let us not grow weary nor “faint in our minds”... but rather “lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb 12:3, 12).

A.T. Jannaway

Book Review

History of the Washington DC Christadelphian Ecclesia by Ronald Hicks

This little book is a surprising gem. Meticulously researched and well-illustrated, it is not only a history (in much detail) of the ecclesia and its members, but is an account of one of the most complex fellowship histories any ecclesia could have. Founded in the 1850's by followers of John Thomas, we read of its near demise in the American Civil war, and its revival amid frequent visits by John Thomas, these due at least partially to the presence in Washington at one time or another of his father and three of his siblings. Many prominent Christadelphians also visited the city, so among the stories of its members we have brief glimpses such brethren as Robert Roberts, Robert Ashcroft, and Henry Sulley.

But the most interesting story to me is the way the little ecclesia fell into the fold of firstly Thomas Williams, and so joined what we would now call the Unamended fellowship. It then aligned with AH Zilmer (of the Faith Fellowship), for which it was disfellowshipped by the larger Unamended group. The tiny little group it was joined with then only consisted of the Baltimore "Faith" Ecclesia, a group in Richmond, and the Bethany Ecclesia in rural Virginia. It also shared some fellowship at one time with Robert Huggins, a former Christadelphian who was pastor of the CGAF church in Cleveland. Finally, it joined the Amended fellowship in 1954. (The Faith Fellowships' only remnant is now the First Christadelphian Church of Catonsville, near Baltimore).

Many other prominent Christadelphians have passed through the city, so it is not just an account of the local ecclesia, but a microcosm on the community, written in a thoroughly engaging way.

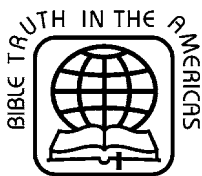
Peter Hemingray

The book can be obtained from the Author, 4909 Newport Ave, Bethesda, MD 20816 (ronaldphicks@prodigy.net). Price \$8 US including Postage in North America.

"And if I perish, I perish" (Esth 4:16)

The story of Esther is an exciting drama to read, especially the events which followed her words here. The lesson for us is that there is always at least one pivotal point in everyone's life, a crossroads where we must choose a pathway, leading to a decision which becomes a life-changing event. To make no decision at all is itself a decision! It is a decision to go along with whatever life offers, with no specific destination in view. From a spiritual point of view that is what the great majority are doing, refusing to decide whether there is a God or not. If they have no time for God, then God will have no time for them. The day will come when that really matters, in fact, when nothing else matters at all.

(David Caudery)



Bible Mission News

Link Visit to Guyana 2012 by Bro. Ted and Dolores Sleeper

Part 1: Bible School

We arrived on the shores of Guyana in time for the annual Bible School hosted this year by the Eccles Ecclesia. When the presiding brother for the day acknowledged us, he welcomed us home again. For us Guyana is like a second home. We grew up there spiritually. We have watched a generation depart and welcomed a new generation. (We have memories and stories of brothers and sisters that are largely unknown to many of the young people in Guyana.) So, we took our seats among our brethren once again.

Bible School

The school was supported by all six Guyana ecclesias, with the majority from the three Demerara ecclesias, as they are close by. The Bible school speakers were bre. Clive Drepaul (Brooklyn, NY) and Ian Neblett (Panama). The classes were well received and thought provoking. Both brothers were accompanied by their wives: sisters Christine and Nishla. Sis. Nishla also gave a Sisters' class, which we all enjoyed.



At the Bible School in the Eccles Hall



Sisters preparing the lunch for the Bible School

The flow of the Bible School was disrupted a bit Saturday afternoon as many drove out to a village on the East coast of the Demerara river to attend a memorial service. The service was held underneath the family home of young Sis. Shellana Baynes who was baptized less than two years ago. Her sudden death was devastating to her fiancé Bro. Rayon. We squeezed under tarps, strung over the yard, heavy with rain and scattered with streams of water bursting through small

holes. Between crouching as the weight of the water reduced the height clearance of the tarp and dodging the streams of water pouring through, we wondered if the tarp would give way under the weight of the water! It was heart wrenching to see the grief etched in the faces around us, but most especially of our dear Bro. Rayon.

As we made the return trip to Georgetown, we were amazed to see waves breaching the sea wall and flooding one side of the road, blocking the flow of traffic. Georgetown is about nine feet below sea level and at the mercy of the ancient Dutch sea wall.

The Sunday schools had agreed that each would prepare the parable of the sower to present at the Bible school. The presentations were creative and unique. Ruimveldt was the most inspirational. This Sunday school is not an ecclesial Sunday school, but comes solely from outreach in a very poor area of Georgetown. Just over 20 children participated with the encouragement of their Sunday school teachers. It was delightful to see the earnestness of all the children from all of the Sunday schools.



The Ruimveldt Sunday school children during their presentation.

Another special activity was open-air talks given on three evenings of the Bible school. These were public outreach talks given from the front yard and veranda of Bro. Berry and Sis. Elaine Williams' home using very loud speakers to penetrate the surrounding homes with the Gospel message. Having learned from many years in Guyana to expect the unexpected, one of the nights we were driven to the shelter of the veranda of the house due to rain falling and another night, in the midst of

the first talk, the next-door neighbor blasted her *louder* speakers with music to celebrate her husband's birthday. Ted begged her to turn it down for an hour so we could continue, which thankfully, she agreed to do. The last night a neighbor lingered in conversation with one of the speakers for nearly an hour after the final talk. This gave everyone a boost of encouragement.

Part 2: Berbice

Travel to Berbice

Since the opening of a floating bridge across the Berbice River, travel time to Berbice has been reduced to a little less than two hours, unless, of course, you happen to travel when the bridge is open to river traffic and closed to vehicles. Then your travel time easily is doubled.

New Amsterdam

Each year we are so thankful to stay with our widowed sister, Bibi Rupenarine (nee Hakh), who was finishing high school when we first came to Guyana. She is an amazing example of steadfastness, despite hardship, discouragement, persecution and tragedy. We admire and respect her for her devoted service to our Lord. May God continue to strengthen her.



Sis. Neisha Hanif
1931-2012

We once again convened at Sis. Neisha Hanif's daughter's home for our annual Breaking of Bread with Sis. Neisha. She has been housebound for more than eight years. Under the care of her daughter Sis. Annie, Sis. Neisha looked contented and better than she has in years. Hence, much to our great shock, we received a message a month later that she had died suddenly. She now is indeed at peace awaiting the resurrection.

In Guyana we also learn patience and flexibility. While heavy rains delayed us starting our day of visiting, they also forced home a couple of brothers that otherwise would have been working! We very much enjoy seeing the children of our brothers and sisters as they grow up. We have watched them change from toddlers to questioning young adults searching for answers and challenging the foundations of their beliefs. We pray that as they emerge from this their spiritual foundation will be stronger because of it.

In Berbice, unlike Demerara, many of the sisters are at home



New Amsterdam Bible class

caring for their children and keeping the home without the benefit of the many conveniences we have to lessen the labor and time involved. Our brothers and sisters labor to provide for their families in many different ways; they are cane-cutters, civil servants, nurses, teachers, supervisors, farmers, market vendors, shop keepers, etc.

Plegt Anker

We journeyed the 20 miles to Plegt Anker in just under three hours, part way with taxi, part walking, and the final leg in our Bro. Sam's vehicle. The changes at the Plegt Anker

farm there were nothing short of amazing! We were delighted to meet Oris and Shinele Chisholm, now residing at the Hammond's former residence and caretaking and farming the property. Last year, the house was occupied by more than 200 marabunta nests (a wasp with a nasty, painful sting), bats and wood ants (termites). One year later the vermin were virtually gone and evidence of agricultural production visible. The results of the dedicated hard work and perseverance of these two are a wonderful testimony to what these two have done, while attending to the needs of their five month-old son! Oris was raised in the Plegt Anker Sunday school, as were many of his many relatives. As a teen he left the area 'seeking his fortune' and this last year returned to his roots and his home. Praise and thanks



Newly baptized Bro. Oris and Sis. Shinele with son Junior.



Rasheed family (minus daughter Sarah) at their shop under their home.

be to God, he and his wife were both baptized the end of May! That will swell the number of brothers in the ecclesia to four!

Their residence is in a state of some disrepair and in need of structural and safety improvements so that they can remain there for the long term. Parts of the floor and exterior walls on the weather side are so rotted that they have stuffed newspapers in the gap. They are a delightful and hardworking couple who have brought encouragement to the isolated and struggling ecclesia in Plegt Anker.

Kilcoy

Kilcoy is now the most thriving ecclesia in Berbice. When we first came to Guyana in 1971, it was considered a satellite of New Amsterdam. In the mid-80s it boasted a membership of over 40 brothers and sisters and a large Sunday school and active CYC. Then immigration to Canada opened and most of the former members now attend various Canadian ecclesias. By the grace of God, they have slowly recovered over the last 10 years, creeping up in membership to about 16. The warm-hearted and welcoming spirit of Kilcoy continues. Sis. Seerojnie, Sis. Leah and Bro. Charlie are the only ones left from the original members. Sis. Seerojnie and her husband,

Lenny, open their home to us every year. Lenny's mother was a member of the ecclesia before her sudden death from cancer about 15 years ago. They are a delightful couple with whom we enjoy many Bible conversations each year.

The oldest daughter of the Ndjelekulu family was married last December and the next daughter lives in Georgetown while attending the University of Guyana. The remaining family of five has settled comfortably in Kilcoy and finally lives without the fear of expulsion; they are now all naturalized residents of Guyana, although their original home was the Congo. It is astounding to consider all the Africans scattered throughout the world, displaced by the violence and warfare that continues to ravage Africa. Some of these are our brothers and sister many who learned the Gospel in refuge camps.



Sisters' class at joint Berbice service.

Each year as we depart Guyana, we consider the spiritual encouragement and brotherly love we receive from our brothers and sisters there. We feel inadequate and undeserving and yet so richly blessed. If there are any among you who could spend a month, or better a year, away from home, the brothers and sisters in Guyana would greatly appreciate your ministrations. And, we can say confidently from personal experience,

you will return home to your ecclesia with far more than you ever were able to give!

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

Baptism in Santiago de Chile

The small ecclesia in Chile has been through its ups and downs over the last few years, however, the last week of May 2012 has been one of great encouragement. After several challenging days tracking down a suitable body of water in the deepening Chilean winter, and coordinating everyone's movements, Bro. Cristian Ivan Zamora Castañeda was baptised into the saving name of Jesus Christ.

Cristian is very familiar with the Bible, having spent much of his life a Jehovah's Witness. However the questions that mounted over the years were increasingly met with ultimatum rather than answer and for three or four years Cristian continued with a strong faith, but with unanswered questions and without brothers and sisters with whom he could regularly meet.

It is positive to note that Cristian's first contact with the Truth was through a Facebook group. Although not a universally embraced medium, on this occasion

it served as the vehicle which linked our new brother with those who led him through his study of the true Gospel.

The active members in Chile now number five, with three living in Santiago and two in the southern city of Temuco. The brethren in Santiago meet in a small rented office and are accompanied by three serious students, who — as can be seen in the accompanying photo, our new brother Cristian at the right — make up a group that generates a warm environment of mutual appreciation of God's word in this city, which at this time of year can be a pretty cold place.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*



**Santiago Ecclesia,
our new brother Cristian
is the tall man standing
to the right in the photo.
Sis. Christian Alderson is
beside him.**

The Truth in El Salvador

Bro. Doug Hawthorne from the Simi Hills, California ecclesia shares the following information about his recent trip to El Salvador.

After expressing an interest to participate in a CBMA mission effort to Central America, I was connected with Bro. Don Luff of Brantford, Ontario, and he gently encouraged me in the weeks ahead of the planned visit in late May. I prepared three classes using PowerPoint in English, and set about to translate them to Spanish using Google, as it had been over 50 years since I took Spanish in High School and I was a bit rusty. I found that using Google was far from successful, as it had trouble translating the incomplete sentences in my 'bullet points' of the presentation. Google translated the Catholic Pope as 'El Papa Frite', or in other words, the big French fry. A better plan was to engage my colleagues at work, most of whom were from Central America originally. They were very helpful and showed interest especially in the "Mark of the Beast" presentation.

On landing in San Salvador, I was greeted by an exuberant Bro. Manuel and Sis. Sylvia Fernandez. The warm hugs and welcome was quite indicative of the reception that we would soon receive from the members of the three ecclesias we planned to visit over the next few days. Bro. Don joined us in the airport and we set off to San Salvador to stay at the home of Bro. Manuel and Sis. Sylvia.

Saturday we traveled to the Sonsonate Ecclesia, where about 30 members including children, were delighted to see us. Many of them spoke better English than I could



Bro. Doug being met at the airport by Bro. Manuel and Sis. Sylvia Fernandez

Bro. Don helped me present the class on “The Crossing of the Red Sea”, and we were able to show a probable crossing point by Israel of the Gulf of Aqaba capped with a mini-video of divers locating coral encrusted structures of chariot wheels and axles. The Ecclesia managed with my feeble Spanish, which was interpreted by Bro. Don, who also presented a Bible Study of the “Vineyard of the Lord”. The day finished up with a hot meal and warm fellowship together.



The ecclesia at Sonsonate

On Sunday, many of the members of the Sonsonate and Usulután Ecclesias joined us at the San Salvador Ecclesial Hall for Memorial Service. There were about 120 Bre. and Sis. including a goodly number of children. All of the people were quite warm and friendly and the bonding together of brothers and sisters in the one faith is something that is quite exhilarating to experience. It certainly helps to build one’s faith in the Lord, and demonstrates the fact that we are truly one family.

On Tuesday we visited the Usulután Ecclesia located about two hours to the south. Set in a small community replete with chickens and dogs, we found a very faithful group who had labored together for more than a week prior to our arrival. Originally a small house, the hall was transformed with a new concrete floor, fresh paint inside and outside, a new electrical service, and then a podium and benches were added. Outside, a new patio cover and sanitary facilities had been completed.

We were told that all of the members had participated in readying the hall for this special day. Oven baked chicken and rice were prepared in the outdoor brick oven, and was enjoyed by all. Bro. Don presented the “Christadelphians: Who are We and What do We Believe?” and I presented the “Mark of the Beast”. The classes were well received and the warm fellowship continued long after it turned dark. Bro. Julio Garcia expressed everyone’s thanks to the CBMA for its generosity in helping with the hall refurbishing. His closing prayer was filled with thanksgiving and tearful emotions, and it touched every heart.



Yes, the Truth is quite alive in El Salvador, and what a wonderful experience it was.

*Submitted by Sis.
Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC
Publicity*

**The Usulután
Ecclesia**

The Road to Panama

Bro. Doug Hawthorne continued his trip from El Salvador to Panama — and these are his thoughts from this experience.

Flying from El Salvador to Panama City, Bro. Don Luff and I were met by Bro. Luis Sobles of the Colón Ecclesia. The weather in tropical Panama was a bit rainy and saturated with high humidity, and quite different from the climate of California. Yet again the warm greetings of a brother in the one faith melts those differences, and we were welcomed into his and Sis. Vanessa’s home.



On Thursday, Bro. Luis took me to the Gatun Locks of the Panama Canal and we watched the tugs ready the ships to pass through the locks built in 1913. Six locomotives pull the ship ever so carefully through the locks as the ships move from the level of Gatun Lake down 87 feet to sea level. So tight is the clearance on either side that the huge ships are only 12-15 inches from the walls.

For this trip, the Colón Ecclesia had

planned a special effort on Saturday featuring four classes. The activity was promoted in several ways, including placing 50 posters into local businesses, distributing 500 handbills, radio announcements, newspaper ads, and guests that were personally invited. Distributing the handbills along the main street in town on Friday, we found that passersby were eager to take the handbills and all were distributed in less than an hour. An air-conditioned Banquet Hall had been secured, and Saturday morning all of the members of the Colón Ecclesia were readying the facility for the classes. Apparently true to the custom of Panamanians, no guests were in attendance at the 11:00 AM start time. By 11:45, however, the first wave had arrived, and guests were streaming in all day until there were 25 visitors, and 13 of their children. That was double the size of the 12 members, and 6 of their children.

There were three classes on “The Messiah” given by Bro. Don and I wound up the day with the PowerPoint presentation “The Crossing of the Red Sea”. The guests had so bonded with the members that they willingly participated in the group photo afterwards. Unlike guests to our own ecclesia in Simi Hills, California, this group found the literature table especially interesting and every piece of the 200 or so pamphlets sent down by Bro. and Sis. Jim and Jean Hunter were taken. Six of the guests returned on Sunday for Memorial Service, and stayed for the presentation on “The Miracle of Israel”. In our home ecclesia, guests are often quiet and reserved but here in Colón, the guests were talkative, participated in the activities, joined



in the group picture, and actually made the day an enjoyable one for everyone.

Sunday night we moved to Gamboa and visited Bro. and Sis. Jay and Llori Gibson of the Panama City Ecclesia whose home is on the edge of Gatun Lake. We shared the classes with them, and the next day we watched the myriad of ships pass by just a stone's throw from their patio. As our trip drew to a close, I thought of how wonderful it is to share fellowship with brethren and sisters I had not known before, but now have fond memories of, and wish us all to be together in the kingdom.

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BOSTON, MA

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Bro. Bill Caddell on June 26, 2012 at age 94. Bro. Bill was a long time member of the Boston Ecclesia. He was a devoted and loving brother, and his wisdom and kind-hearted spirit will be sorely missed.

With joy, however, we announce the baptism of PETER DAVIS. Peter is the son of Bro. Steve and Sis. Sandy Davis. He was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ on May 27, 2012. May the Lord be with him on his walk to the kingdom.

On the weekend of March 31-April 1, 2012 we held our 21st annual Spring study weekend. We'd like to thank Bro. Jason Cicero (Meriden, CT) for his efforts in leading us in the study of Galatians.

In addition, we'd like to thank Bre. Trevor Bingham (Mississauga West, ON), Paul Melanson (Southern NH), Steve Stewart (San Diego, CA), Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH) and Tom Robideau (Worcester, MA) for their recent exhortations on our behalf.

Jim Sullivan

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We sincerely thank our Bre. James Mansfield (Enfield, Aust.), Peter Forbes (Glenfield, UK), and Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) for their words of exhortation on their recent visits.

Our summer schedule finishes September 9, 2012, and on September 16, 2012, the Sunday school recommences at 10.00 am and the Memorial Service at 11.00 am.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord including: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); James and Glenys Mansfield, Jeff and Leah and Nick Hanns (Enfield Aust.); Curtis Brittle (Cranston, RI); Matthew Link (Washington DC); Seon Levius (Barbados); Tom and Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); Peter and Norma Forbes (Glenfield, UK); and Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ).

Stewart Marsden

JASONVILLE, IN

We are very happy to report the baptism on July 12, 2012, of MICAH RANDOLPH HATCH, son of Bro. Jordan and Sis. Susan Hatch, brother to Sis. Holly and Kayte Hatch, and grandson of Bro. Ted and Sis. Lois Plew. We pray for the Lord's support for him on his walk toward the kingdom.

Ted Plew

KAMLOOPS, BC

God's ecclesia here in Kamloops has had a busy year. We are situated in the interior of British Columbia, near the junction of three highways and therefore we see many visitors throughout the year. We find this a great blessing from our heavenly Father as we are a small ecclesia of 19 members.

We were very excited to have Bro. Chris and Sis. Naomi Winter transferred back with us from the Victoria Ecclesia in March of 2011. They left here for Victoria, BC for a two year sojourn. We welcome them and their boys, Marcus and Micah. We thank our Lord for this active and committed family in our ecclesia.

We rejoiced in the birth of Olivia Lauren to Bro. Jesse and Sis. Lori Fletcher on October 29, 2011. We pray that God will help our ecclesia in assisting Jesse and Lori raise her as a godly seed.

We thank God for the provision of many brothers to minister unto us in these last days before our Lord's return. We thank Bre. Graeme Osborn, Skip Bartholomew, Jason Knorr, Joshua Bartholomew (Okanagan Central, BC); Clement Hart (Maple Ridge, BC); Bill Hlina, Mark Higgs (Vernon, BC); Wesley Butler, Greg Bennett (Victoria, BC); and Colin Hollamby (Wakerie, South Aust.). Their studies have encouraged us as we walk toward God's kingdom.

In September of 2011 our ecclesia hosted a three day bible exhibition to commemorate the Four Hundredth anniversary of the King James Bible. We were able to obtain the exhibition that resides with the Victoria Ecclesia. Bro. Greg Bennett, and Bro. Malcolm Shrimpton with his sister wife, Josie, brought the Bibles from Victoria and were a great asset in setting up the display in the space we had secured for the exhibition. We were able to house the exhibition in an empty store in a local mall at no cost. The manager of the mall was very excited to have us use the space. Bro. Malcolm spent an evening with our ecclesia 'prepping' us to lead visitors through the history of King James Bible. We designed and printed a glossy four colour, two page advertising sheet which was sent to thirty thousand homes in Kamloops. We were so pleased to discover that the local library was having a book sale at the same mall the same weekend and we feel that many book lovers came to our store front because of it.

We advertised the Bible Exhibition as well as the Learn to Read the Bible Effectively classes in our brochure. We had about three hundred go through our exhibition over a three day period, Thursday to Saturday. Amazingly we reconnected with people who had attended a Christadelphian Sunday school or lectures years ago! It was a stimulating and spiritually uplifting three days for all who were able to spend some time with the display and talking to visitors. We had five attendants start our LTRTBE classes, who had not been to the exhibition! Two attendants came right through to the end and felt they had learned so much. They were so pleased that they insisted on providing the tea for the last evening for us! They wanted to thank us for all they had learned and enjoyed. They are not attending our gospel proclamation at this point but are on our mailing list for an invitation to future gospel proclamation activities we offer.

Our ecclesia was richly blessed by the whole special effort of the bible exhibition. We thank our Heavenly Father for the opportunities He gives us to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation which has the power to save.

Pam Fletcher

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON

We are very happy to report the baptism of EMILY ANN ROBINSON on Sunday, July 22, 2012. Emily is the younger daughter of Bro. Ed and Sis. Helen Robinson. Emily had been assigned to schools at Kitchener-Waterloo since her family joined the major about 12 years ago.

We rented a public swimming pool for the occasion and more than fifty brothers, sisters and friends attended the event. The reading was taken from 1 Peter 1, and the address was on the theme of being “born again” and the significance of a new life in Jesus Christ. The unaccompanied singing of hymn number 333 immediately before the baptism was lovely. Following the baptism the memorial service was held at our usual venue when Bro. Mike LeDuke gave an exhortation that was encouraging to Emily and all those who attended. We pray that God’s blessing will be upon Emily in her new life.

Martin Webster

LONDON, ON

During June and July, we enjoyed a visit from Bro. Peter and Sis. Norma Forbes (Glenfield, UK). Bro. Peter was scheduled to give a study day but unfortunately was delayed due to travel problems. He did however give several talks during his stay and we thank him for his ministrations, which were of great spiritual benefit to our ecclesia.

In accordance with her request, we have transferred Sis. Lois Vandenberg to the Brampton, ON Ecclesia. Sis. Lois has been a faithful member of the London ecclesia since her baptism in 1973 and we are very sorry to lose her. We also transfer Sis. Marley Higham-Elliott to the Toronto West, ON Ecclesia and commend her in love to her new ecclesia.

We are looking forward to our annual Fraternal Gathering on September 15, 2012, when Bro. Frank Abel will be speaking on, “God Manifestation”.

Ron Kidd

NORTHERN VIRGINIA, VA

The Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia celebrated its first year of regular meetings in April 2012. We thank God for his continued blessings upon His ecclesia in Northern Virginia and worldwide.

We have been blessed with visits by Bro. Andrew and Sis. Erin Amis and family, and Sis. Heather Locke (Washington DC); Bro. Tom and Sis. Leslie Colby, Bro. Matt and Sis. Carmel Colby, and Bro. Luke and Sis. Laura Colby (Hamilton Book Road, ON). We thank Bro. Andrew for his words of exhortation.

We are extremely pleased to welcome by way of transfer Sis. Elizabeth Huff formerly of the Sarasota, FL meeting; Bro. Jason and Sis. Stephanie Fertig, formerly of the Washington DC meeting; and Bro. Noah Bradburn, formerly of the Shenandoah, VA meeting.

The Northern Virginia Ecclesia has decided to begin our meetings at a new time. Our Sunday School will begin at 9:30 am, and our Memorial Service will start at 10:30 am. Everyone wishing to visit with the Northern Virginia Ecclesia can contact

us through our ecclesial email at: nva.ecclesia@gmail.com, or call Bro. David Fertig at: 703-644-6311.

David Fertig

OTTAWA, ON

Over the past year the Ottawa Ecclesia has welcomed brothers and sisters from various Ontario ecclesias, as well as Oman and Jamaica. We were sorry to lose two members by transfer: Sis. Elaine Easson to Vancouver, and Sis. Lesley Hagar and family to Cambridge. We commend them in love to their new ecclesial homes.

We thank Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD) for thought provoking studies on the early chapters of Genesis, based on his book *The Creation Text*. During his May 26-27, 2012, study weekend, we benefitted from the fellowship of many visiting brothers and sisters; in addition, a number of interested friends attended.

In a small ecclesia such as ours, long-term visitors make a big difference. Sis. Hannah Riddle (Brantford, ON) has been completing her university studies here. Bro. Aubry Riddle (Brantford, ON) joined us for a college work term this spring. Bro. Dan LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON) has been working in Ottawa for several months.

Charles Archard

PARIS AVENUE, OH

The members of the Paris Avenue, OH Ecclesia have enjoyed fellowship with brothers and sisters from other ecclesias during the first semester of 2012. Words of exhortation were given by Bre. Dave Pommer and Fred Telles (Pittsburgh, PA). Bro. Larry Cooper (Seattle, WA) gave us a Wednesday Night Bible Class on the topic of, "Forgiveness".

For our Spring 2012 study weekend we were led in classes dealing with, "Government in Exile." Our speaker was Bro. Ken Langston (Denver, CO). Visitors attended from Indiana, Michigan, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Colorado and several provinces in Canada.

We rejoice in the birth of Nora Gail Canady to Sis. Pauli and Bro. Jordan Canady on June 18, 2012.

Upcoming events this year, Lord willing, will be our Fall Study Weekend on September 15-16, 2012, with Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW, Aust.). His topic will be, "The Return of Christ". Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX) is scheduled for our Fall Study Weekend in 2013 if our Lord and Master has not returned.

For further information on either of these study weekends, contact Bro. Everett Muniz by phone at: 330-497-2811; or by email at: everettmuniz@gmail.com.

Jack Vogelgesang

ROGUE VALLEY, OR

With great joy, we announce the baptisms into the saving name of Jesus Christ, of MARTHA SUGGS, daughter of Sis. Karen Suggs, and of JESSICA YOSHIDA, the daughter of Bro. Randy and Sis. Susanna Yoshida. We also welcome by transfer to our ecclesia, Sis. Laura Griffith and her son, Bro. Ross Griffith from our sister ecclesia in this area: Jackson County, OR.

We thank the following brethren for their ministrations with study days over the last year: Bro. Frank Able (Book Road, ON) on, "The 400th Anniversary of the King

James Bible”; Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, Aust.) on, “How God Deals with the Jacob in all of Us”; Bro. Bob Lloyd on, “If God be for Us” (Verdugo Hills, CA); Bro. Jonathan Wisniewski (Thousand Oaks, CA) on, “The Memorial Emblems”; and Bro. John McConville (Reseda, CA) on, “Introduction to Isaiah”.

Presently, our ecclesia is making preparations for the Rogue River Bible School being held at the end of July, with Bre. David Jennings (Pomona, CA), Jim Cowie, and Stephen Mansfield (Adelaide, Australia). It should be noted that the Recording Brother for our ecclesia is Bro. Randy Yoshida, and all correspondence should be sent to him.

Henry Wisniewski

SHELBURNE, ON

It has been a busy 12 months for the Shelburne Ecclesia. We are continuing with a weekly Bible Reading seminar for our young people and their friends, held in the local public library. Other activities for our young people have included our annual Sunday school entertainment and picnic, held jointly with the Orangeville Ecclesia.

We have been very happy to welcome via transfer Bro. Joe and Sis. Kate Abel from Orangeville, along with their children Kyla, Kailyn, Serenity and Ember. Also Bro. Ben and Sis. Lydia Abel have joined us from North Bay, along with their daughter Ellie.

We have also been blessed with two recent baptisms. JOSEPH DAVIN is the son of Bro. Jim and Sis. Ruth Anne Davin, and KURTIS RUNGE is the son of Bro. Gerhard and Sis. Carolyn Runge. Both young men have grown up in our CYC and Sunday school programs since their parents accepted the truth after attending the “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively Seminars” held locally by our ecclesia over a decade ago. It has been a real blessing and source of encouragement for our ecclesia to see this next generation take on the saving name of Christ. Both Joe and Kurtis gave excellent confessions of faith and wrote beautiful letters to the ecclesia requesting baptism.

Chris Sales

WASHINGTON MUSIC STUDY DAY — BRO. PHIL MUNDEY MAKE THE VOICE OF HIS PRAISE TO BE HEARD!

October 5-7, 2012 Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. Study leader will be Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Bro. Phil was involved in the preparation of the 2002 edition of the Christadelphian Hymn Book, as can be seen in the preface. He has been a music teacher in the UK and in Kenya where he directed the Kenya Conservatoire of Music, and conducted the Nairobi Orchestra. Before retiring he was the Director of Examinations for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in the UK.

The schedule for the weekend is:

FRIDAY Oct 5 (Venue: Baltimore Ecclesial Hall) 7:30 pm

SATURDAY Oct 6 (Venue: Washington D.C. Ecclesial Chapel) 1 pm – 7:30 pm

SUNDAY Oct 7 (Venue: Washington D.C. Ecclesial Chapel) 9:30 am – 3 pm

WEDNESDAY Oct 10 (Venue: Washington D.C. Ecclesial Chapel) 7:45 pm

There is no cost to attend, but please register by contacting Bro. David Perry, dperry1@gmail.com or 410-303-8632.

Minute Meditation

Can we be angry without sinning?

“Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret,” observed Ambrose Bierce. Our anger can certainly lead us astray.

Remember what happened when a man known for his meekness became exasperated and angry with the children of Israel? In the heat of the moment he spoke — and regretted his words ever after. We read in the Psalms that: “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” As a result, Moses died before Joshua led into the Promised Land the people he had faithfully shepherded for 40 years.

Moses in his own words tells us about it: “But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it [the land of Israel] with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.” Moses, the man privileged to speak with God “mouth to mouth,” had sinned so grievously that he was forbidden to enter the land and was to stop pleading with God about it. Instead, God allowed Moses to view the land from the top of a nearby mountain.

Moses was patiently self-controlled throughout most of his life, but in a moment of anger he sinned and lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land. His example is a warning to us. How often has our anger gotten out of hand and we have said or done something that we may regret for the rest of our lives?

Paul told the Ephesians, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” To the Colossians he wrote, “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” We need to overcome our feelings of animosity or vengefulness towards others, humbly accept that God is guiding our lives, and strive to show forth a Christ-like attitude.

Lyman Abbot offers good advice when he suggests: “Do not teach your children never to be angry; teach them how to be angry.” Everyone get angry at times. We may not be able to prevent it, but there is a secret, which is to control our anger and not do anything in haste when angry. This advice is usually easier said than done. The old adage of counting to ten will help, and sometimes we should count to 100 or even 1000. Before lashing out, just walk away and try to get those angry feelings under control before risking speech or action. We tell children, “Do not hit; use your words.” However, our words need to be carefully chosen, as Moses learned. The Psalmist says: “In your anger do not sin, when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”

Often people who say or do wrong things when they are angry justify their actions by saying, “But I was angry,” as if it is okay because of their anger. The lesson of Moses teaches us that being angry does not make right anything we say. We are responsible for our words and actions even when angry. Solomon observes: “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

Is it a sin to become angry? No, it is not a sin to be angry, but it is wrong to commit sin when we are angry. Paul advises, “Be ye angry, and sin not”. The Psalmist tells us that “God is angry with the wicked every day”. Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the people in Sodom. Our anger may be justified, but that is not a license to sin.

It is what we do while we are angry that can be the problem. There are times when anger should spur us to action. Lot should have acted on his anger towards the corrupt men of Sodom by removing his family from that toxic environment. God was angry with Israel for their idolatry, and when they would not change in spite of many warnings from prophets, God removed them from the land. Jesus was angry with the moneychangers in the temple and he drove them out. A controlled, thoughtful, Christ-like response to anger is the right thing to do.

The problem is when anger spurs us to wrong action. Cain slew his brother Abel. Joseph’s brethren plotted to kill him. Moses spoke unadvisedly. Daniel’s enemies schemed to get him thrown to the lions. When we are provoked or treated unjustly, we are tempted to retaliate. We need to remember our Lord who opened not his mouth when reviled, and who asked God to forgive those who were crucifying him. Paul reminds us that vengeance belongs to the LORD, and He will repay.

When anger grabs us, we must let it go and turn it over to God. It is not good to nurse our anger. Paul advises, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” which means we should not keep angry thoughts churning when we go to bed. As one philosopher observed: “Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.”

When we feel provoked, let us remember the words of Peter: “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

Robert J. Lloyd

The deserving man

The man deserving the name is one whose thoughts and exertions are for others, rather than himself; whose high purpose is adopted on high principles, and never abandoned while heaven or earth afford the means of accomplishing it. He is one who will neither seek an indirect advantage by a specious word, nor take an evil path to secure a good purpose.

Walter Scott

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

SEPTEMBER 2012

- 1-2 Victoria, BC** Fraternal Gathering. "The Scribes and Pharisees: Were Their Problems Our Problems?" by Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Contact csnobelen@csll.ca.
- 8 Hamilton Greenaway, ON** Fraternal Picnic will be held at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Georgetown, ON, at 2:00pm. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the topic, "Who is My Neighbour? — Lessons from the Parable of the Good Samaritan". A picnic supper will be held at 5:00pm.
- 9-14 Adult Study Week** at Wildwood Manor Ranch in Ballinafad, ON. The week consists of daily interactive Bible study, taken from the last week of Christ's life. Workbooks will be available. Participants may use their own camping equipment, or the covered wagons on site. There are also motels available nearby. The facilities used are provided by Sis. Annette Milne. All meals will be provided. Contact Bro. Jack Robinson jcrobins@worldchat.com or Bro. Peter Stonell peter.maggiestonell@gmail.com.
- 15 Bedford, NS** Study day. Bro. John Mannell (Mississauga West, ON) will be speaking on the theme, "Galatians". Please contact Julia Snobelen thesnobelens@hotmail.com for more information.
- 15 London, ON** Study Day. The speaker will be Bro. Frank Abel and his topic is: "God Manifestation". There will be three classes, the first class commencing at 11 a.m. Lunch will be provided.
- 15-16 Paris Avenue, OH** Fall Study Weekend Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, Australia) will be speaking on "The Return of Christ".
- 22 Brantford, ON** Prophecy Day will be held this year with our Bro Matt Norton (Lismore, Aust.) speaking on the theme "Revelation Examined & Explained."

OCTOBER 2012

- 5-7 Midwest Christadelphian Young Couples Weekend** will be held at the Garland Resort in Michigan. The purpose of the weekend is to help couples grow and develop in the Truth by drawing on the wisdom, comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures. The content of the weekend is geared toward finding balance between family, ecclesia, work etc., with additional focus on raising a godly family and relationships with extended family. There is an informational power point presentation available for download on www.mcycw.com. Contact Annalee Cooper registration@mcycw.com
- 5-7 Washington, DC** Music Study weekend. Theme: "Make the Voice of His Praise to be Heard!". Study leader will be Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. Friday evening, 7:30pm, Baltimore hall. Saturday and Sunday, Washington DC ecclesial chapel. Contact Bro. David Perry dperry1@gmail.com 410-303-8632.
- 6-7 Atlanta Area, GA** Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON).
- 6-7 Sussex, NB** Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD).

- 13-14 Echo Lake, NJ** Fall Study weekend. The speaker is Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) and his subject is "Promises of the Kingdom".
- 20 Barrie, ON** Fall Study day. The theme is, "Modern Challenges for 21st Century Disciples". Subtitles will be "In the world", "In the State", and "In the Ecclesia". For more information please contact Bro. Bruce Abelby 519-925-5297 or bnb69abel@hotmail.com.
- 27 New England Little Disciples Gathering** a day of Bible study and activities on Peter for children Pre-K to 7th Grade. Location is Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA. Contact www.nelittledisciples.com email nelittledisciples@hotmail.com.

NOVEMBER 2012

- 9-11 Brothers' Weekend** at Hidden Acres, New Hamburg, ON. An excellent opportunity to stimulate faith and build brotherly love through which our families and ecclesias can be strengthened; all for the glory of God. Bro Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Theme: "Get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." For information Bro Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 or email natejbadger@gmail.com.
- 10-11 Largo/Orlando/Sarasota, FL** Study Weekend. Speaker Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX). Theme: "As A Man Thinketh In His Heart." Lunch will be provided both Saturday and Sunday. Contact: Bro. Walt Dodrill/Largo at waltdodrill@msn.com or call 727-410-0896.
- 10-11 Pittsburgh, PA** CYC Study Weekend. Bro. Everett Muniz (Paris Ave, OH) will be speaking on "Holy Living in Perilous Times". Contact Sis. Becca Pommer at (724) 757-8582 or pghecclesia@gmail.com.
- 10-11 Victoria, BC** Fall Study Weekend. "Defining the Household" by Bro. Wesley Butler (Vancouver, BC), Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC), and Bro. Simon Snobelen (Vancouver, BC). For further information contact csnobelen@csll.ca.
- 23-25 Washington, DC** Family Bible Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled "The Pattern of the Tabernacle". Contact: Bro. Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org for additional information.

FEBRUARY 2013

- 24-Mar 1 Palm Springs Bible School.** The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales) and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)

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Poetry

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2Tim 2:11-13).

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

*Our lives are not our own,
We gave them, Lord to thee,
When in your name we were baptized
From sin you set us free*

*Help us to live in you
And crucify our pride
And dedicate ourselves to you
Who for our healing died*

*Help us to live in you
Enduring to the end
That in our lives the world may see
Our Master and our Friend*

*Help us to live in you
In nothing you deny
That those who see our steadfast lives
May know the reason why*

*Help us to live in you
And always faithful be
That in the day of your return
Yourself in us you'll see*

Margaret Stoneel (Hamilton, Greenaway ecclesia)

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 75

October, 2012

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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Should a Christian Protest?

We cannot escape the conclusion that the same teaching of Jesus and his apostles which commands abstinence from violence also teaches that we can have no part in protest against authority. It is part of the same logic of our faith. Protest — in any cause — is an act of assertiveness: it is incompatible with discipleship. However peaceable one's protest might be, however passive the demonstration, however humble the approach to those in authority, one's stance as a protester is that of a plaintiff who seeks to petition his lords and masters.

Those who petition are claiming the right to make a demand of worldly authority; the disciple, on the other hand, discounts his earthly citizenship (Phil 3:20) and makes no claim upon those who govern him; even less does he demand something that those in authority have decided not to allow. Although the disciple of Christ, in common with others, receives the benefits which the state confers and is grateful for these, he neither expects nor demands them.

Harry Tennant, Christ and Protest

Editorial

Preaching the Gospel

“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1Cor 9:14).

“Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11).

Paid ministers

It is a fact, it must be admitted, that the current culture of our community frowns on any idea of a paid ministry. It is so ingrained that, for example, when the group known as the CGAF was in talks (still ongoing) to join with the Central Christadelphians, the very fact they had a “paid” minister fifty years ago was quite a problem to some, although it was not ultimately addressed in the doctrinal agreements that were made. It must also be admitted that John Thomas was very fond of citing the passage from Titus above, as he inveigled against his contemporary ministerial colleagues, accusing them of putting the importance of maintaining an income over searching for the Truth. And when ministers of one denomination or another joined the Christadelphians in the nineteenth century, it was hard for them to find employment, and impossible to employ them in their previous profession. So much so that Robert Roberts employed some of them as assistant editors.

However, John Carter said many years ago “As a community we have no paid ministry in order that we may be free from the evils that Titus had to contend with. But we should remember that we have no right to demand unpaid service. The Lord did demand service from the great, but those who were served had a responsibility. Paul said, *‘The Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel’* (1Cor 9:14), and so to the Galatians he commanded that *‘those who are taught must share all the blessings of life with those who teach them the Word’* (Gal 6:6, Moffatt). Just as a Master provides the keep for his slave, so the brethren ought to provide for their servants.”¹

There are many passages that talk about the rights of those who spend their time preaching to be compensated for the effort, and very few that warn against the danger. For example:

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1Tim 5:17-18).

Another quotation from Paul is perhaps appropriate: *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”* (2Thess 3:10). The converse was true: where work for the truth demanded a great deal of time which could not then be spent on remunerative employment, it had

to be paid for by someone in the first century community — either by the ecclesia, by a rich brother or sister whose contributions Paul valued, or by the worker himself, who then spent time, energy and substance. The principle is as true today as it was then: if a brother (or sister) is asked to spend time in work for the Truth, and by so doing deprive themselves of gainful employment, consideration ought to be given for recompensing them. Much work in our community is, of course, quite voluntary, but we cannot really expect someone to reduce themselves to penury on our behalf.

In fact, our community provides for the employment, or at least covers the living expenses, of quite a number of its members in one capacity or another, including a large number of those in the mission field.

Unpaid service

In most of our ecclesias, the vast bulk of the work required is freely performed by its members. Whether it is speaking from the platform, presiding, cleaning the hall, preparing the meals, rarely are our members compensated. Thus the work of the ecclesia is spread quite widely, and we indeed are thereby knit together into the one body. *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1Cor 12:12).* In most of our ecclesias, the passive seat occupier is quite rare, and all contribute according to their abilities, with their time being given quite freely, and many of the minor expenses of the ecclesias being taken care of also.

Given the typical size of our ecclesias, this is almost a necessity. Very few ecclesias in North America number in excess of a hundred or so, and so for the most part we would be unable to afford a paid minister even if we wanted the same. Thus the needed work is spread around, and many perform Bible Study that they would not perhaps otherwise engage in, if they did not have to give regular exhortations, Bible study classes, and lectures.

Service that ought to be recompensed

Commonly in the UK, ecclesias will invite visiting speakers for a Sunday, to deliver exhortations, lectures, or both. And in the areas with the greater density of ecclesias, it is very common to invited speakers to deliver the mid-week Bible classes also. This results in many ecclesias having more than half their appointments covered by outside speakers — while their own brethren are away speaking. Many such brethren find they are away at least one Sunday in two from their own ecclesias, with three in four sometimes being the case. All this use of invited speakers has caused much discussion in the pages of *The Christadelphian*, and there is a clear consensus that when visitors travel any significant distance, their expenses ought to be covered. Not only that, but the recommended way this is to be handled is to give the speaker his expenses, without either waiting to be asked or asking about the expenses. If the speaker feels comfortable paying his own expenses, he can put the re-imbursement into the collection, or contribute them to a Christadelphian charity he supports if he feels the ecclesia has no difficulty affording the amount of money involved.

It might be that and ecclesia finds it difficult to afford such expenses, but would still like to be able to hear outside speakers. They should, in these circumstances, broadcast a general request for such help, explaining the circumstances — but not invite someone and say “by the way, I am sorry we cannot pay your expenses”. In such cases, you are relying on the fact many brethren, even if they can ill afford such expenses, will be too embarrassed to acknowledge it.

I believe such a practice ought to be universal in this continent also, although it is much less common to invite brethren to travel significant distances to speak at regular meetings of the ecclesia.

Bible Schools and other special gatherings

Such occasions are usually noted, at least in North America, by the presence of speaking brethren from other areas, sometimes from quite a distance. After all, *“A prophet [speaker] is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house”* (Mark 6:4). Some Bible Schools even seem to have a tradition of inviting speakers from three different continents — North America, the UK, and a brother from the Southern Hemisphere. So it is not surprising that the travel of those brethren from other continents is almost always reimbursed, often with several Bible Schools sharing the expenses. And of course the cost of the Bible Schools is also covered, and commonly the costs of a spouse are covered also.

This is not surprising, as the preparation work required to be able to deliver up to twelve high class talks (adults and teens) and usually at least two other addresses is enormous. The time required can easily run into several hundred hours, all of which quite willingly and freely given. But it is sometimes the case that domestic speakers, although having the costs of the Bible School covered, have many other expenses that are overlooked. Whether it be the costs of copying, the incidental expenses in gathering material, or the costs of travel to and from the Bible School, sometimes none of these are considered by the inviting school or weekend. This ought not to be. If a speaker has to come any distance (and this is almost always the case), at least the cost of the car mileage should be automatically given to the speaker — and not just the cost of gas, but some approximation to the Federal mileage rate. Air fares, hotels, it is the least we can do. And he should at least be asked about any other costs consequential to his efforts, and this in a matter that invites an honest response.

If the organizers cannot afford such costs, perhaps they should consider the rational in inviting speakers from a distance. We all like to hear fresh voices, or those who are well known among the community, but to do so should neither beggar the organizers nor the speakers.

Of course this does not prevent the speaker from refusing to accept the expenses, or returning them in the collection. However, care must be taken to ensure that the one giving the service does not feel obligated in any way to meet his own costs, for any gift to the ecclesia, or other gathering, must be given *“not grudgingly, or of necessity”* (2Cor 9:7).

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” (1Cor 9:7)

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*: 1943, p 62.

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org.

Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Exhortation

The River of Eden

The early chapters of Genesis tell us how the world got to be the way it is. And woven into the accounts of God’s creative work are details that may strike us as odd. When the Spirit takes up 5 verses of this tight narrative to tell us about what happened to the river after it left the garden, it may be useful to ask: Why do we need to know this?

Of course, the obvious answer is, so we can know where the garden was. But seriously, I’ve seen several different analyses of this question based on the four rivers listed in Genesis 2, with basically three different conclusions. The garden was in:

- The Tigris-Euphrates delta in lower Babylonia
- The highlands of central Turkey where the Tigris and Euphrates headwaters are very close
- Jerusalem.

There has been so much written on this subject, with so little truly satisfying evidence, that I think it’s not really a useful question at this point. By way of illustrating the difficulty, I’ll just observe that the Genesis account describes the river dividing into four courses downstream of the garden. This is the kind of thing that happens in a river delta: the Nile delta is famous for its “seven streams”, and the Tigris-Euphrates delta has similar features. But one of the four rivers, Hiddekel, is mentioned in relation to Assyria, which is far north of the delta. I think we have lost too much information over the centuries to understand this passage in a geographical sense. Nor do I believe the Scripture would have given so much space to this matter if it were simply about location.

Purpose of the river

So let’s look at this passage from a different angle. What is described in Genesis 2 is, first of all, a river to water the garden: let us understand clearly that the purpose of the river is to water the garden. It is the provision of God, given to ensure that everything in the garden would live and thrive under the man’s care. So, then, why do we need to know what happened to this river after it left the garden?

God who set up the garden also is the creator of the whole earth. He established the garden as a place for the man, who He created for dominion over the whole earth. The garden was not an end in itself: the careful description of the four rivers reminds us that the rest of God's creation also needed water. By His provision there was one source of water for the garden; it was more than adequate for the garden itself, so what remained watered a great portion of the land outside the garden.

In this great excess of God's provision were lessons for Adam as well as for us. **First**, God's provision for Adam and for the garden far exceeded anything needed for the purpose: He is not stingy provider, nor inclined to short-change us in our needs. **Second**, His generosity is not limited to those who are in His special care: "... *yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table*" (Matt 15:27). So the river, when it had done its job watering the garden, was given to the lands outside the garden, to bring life there as well. The presence of the garden was of benefit to the parts of the world nearby, since the overflow of God's blessing fell on them. **Third**, Adam, looking out from the garden, would see a world not yet under his dominion, but fertile and promising: a world with dangers, a world untamed, but not lifeless or unrelentingly hostile. These same parts of the world were kept ready by God's blessing for the dominion of man, the more easily to be incorporated into the garden since they were already watered and fertile.

Expanding that last thought a bit, consider Adam's role in the garden. His assignment was "*to tend and keep it.*" This too was of God's provision. And, as the man's abilities grew, he too would find he could do more than what God had told him to do: he could extend his care to the well-watered lands outside the garden. He was not assigned to do this, not directly, but if he knew of the four rivers, he would certainly understand the lesson: God does more than He really has to do; and He means for us to be like Him. And He meant from the beginning that man's dominion should extend over the whole of the earth. So the four rivers pointed in the direction man might follow, caring for a portion of the earth outside the garden.

One reason to think this is a good way to understand the passage is the mention of the treasures of Havilah. This appears to be a reference to the land later called Arabia. No one seems to know what bdellium is, but gold and onyx are used in the High Priest's vestments. That is, items useful for the service of Yahweh. It is these that would come under the dominion of Adam were he to extend his care to the lands watered by the four rivers. That is, there are good things, things suitable for the service of God, outside the garden.

Adam was commanded to take care of the garden; and it would have been wrong for him to leave that task undone while seeking further dominion. But the divine commentary shows the potential advantage in expanding the garden when he should be able to do so. Again, there is nothing in Genesis 2 that directs Adam to do any such thing; but it does seem implicit in the record and in the overall purpose of God in making man.

The pattern we have seen is consistent with God's later revelation. In the Bible we see many instances of God's provision for His special people or special place overflowing to the benefit of the world outside.

The river as a symbol

To use the symbol, in the days of Moses the river of the garden flowed with deliverance when God led His people out of Egypt: It flowed also to a mixed multitude of people who came with them.

In the days of Joshua the son of Nun, the river of the garden flowed with promises fulfilled for God's people: It flowed also to Rahab, who received her promise from the two spies, and to the Gibeonites, who won a promise by deceit.

The river of the garden flowed redemption in the days of Boaz, the son of Salmon; it did not stop at the borders of the holy people, but went out also to redeem Ruth.

In the days of our Lord, the river flowed with the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It flowed first with the preaching of one man, then with 12, then with 70. It flowed through Galilee, then Judea; and it was not unknown outside those territories. The Syro-Phoenician woman came to him, the Roman centurion came to him, and certain Greek pilgrims approached his disciples at the end. The river flowed more abundantly after his resurrection, when 3000 answered the call to salvation in one day. It dispersed abroad, bringing life to the world. It gushed forth in Samaria, broke through in the household of Cornelius, and overflowed all its banks in the preaching of Paul and Barnabas and Silas.

The effect of this surplus of God's provision has been, time and again, not only to nourish and strengthen the garden, but to expand it by calling out of the nations people who would join themselves to the name of Yahweh. But there is more.

In the days of Jonah, the river of God flowed repentance and mercy for the people of Israel, but they did not respond. It flowed also to the men of Nineveh, who did respond and were spared. So the lands downstream can benefit from the provision of God even when the keepers of the garden do not. This happened again when the Jewish nation turned away the gospel of the kingdom: the river flowed on, and divided to all the gentiles as at this day. And it is certain that even where the gospel is poorly understood and the Father's will not obeyed, even in those wild lands outside the garden, the river has brought fertility and prosperity.

But the Jews, to whom the gospel came first, sought to dam up the flow — and they have as a result been left desolate, a desert. The prophets are emphatic in declaring Israel will be restored, that all her streams will be filled once more with the blessings of her God. In the kingdom, in the day when the gospel of the kingdom is fulfilled, Israel will once more be the garden of God.

The last Adam

No longer will Adam tend that garden, but the last Adam — a life-giving spirit. The river will flow out from below his throne. Zechariah says half the water will flow westward to the Mediterranean Sea and half will flow eastward to the Dead Sea; Ezekiel says it will render the Dead Sea a living sea, where fishermen will take their catch. And as true as this may be in the literal sense, surely it foretells the spirit of the day when the prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled.

“Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold,

I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise” (Isa 43:18-21).

This is the time he foretells, when God will provide once more the waters of life for His people; and He will provide it in such abundance that the wild animals of the desert can share in it. And of course, following the figure, all the gentiles will enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom. The effect of this provision of God is declared very plainly by Ezekiel:

“Thus says the Lord GOD: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it” (Ezek 36:33-36).

Remember the people I mentioned earlier: the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with Moses, Rahab and the Gibeonites, and Ruth. In all these instances, people who were not part of the holy nation responded to the blessings they found flowing out of Eden. They looked upstream, as it were, to find God the source, and joined themselves to Israel. Micah foretells a time when this will be widely practiced:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Mic 4:1-2).

All this serves to cheer us as we look forward to the Lord’s coming. Until that day we continue under his care, sustained by the same gospel of the kingdom, by the same instruction in the ways of God that he taught so long ago, and by this remembrance in bread and wine. This is more than a meager sustenance: even today the river flows through this place with such depth and volume as to make this garden fertile and beautiful under the care of our Lord the gardener; and surely our God even today provides so much more than is needed here, to bless our neighbors and our communities around us. Let the gospel go forth liberally as we have been blessed; and let us pray for our neighbors that they also might recognize the blessings of that river and look upstream to find its source, our Father, and to become part of His garden.

Jim Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

First Principles

Fellowship Practice According to the Scriptures (1)

Our common understanding of Scripturally-based first principle doctrines is essential for us being united into a single fellowship community, to the honor and glory of our heavenly Father. We have many resources that review these Biblical first principles: e.g., *Elpis Israel*, *Christendom Astray*, *A Declaration of the Truth Revealed in the Bible*, *The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith*, *Studies in the Statement of Faith*, and *What are the First Principles*. Along with these common doctrinal beliefs, it is also necessary that we have a shared understanding of Scripturally-based fellowship practice.

This is the first of two articles in which we review Biblical principles of fellowship. We base the outline of our thoughts on Paul's call to unity:

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is **one body**, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; **One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all**, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph 4:1-6).

We arrange our comments on these seven unities in the following sequence:

1. One God and Father of all.
2. One body.
3. One Lord.
4. One faith.
5. One baptism.
6. One hope of your calling.
7. One spirit.

We discuss these positive affirmations of unity, together with some contrasting implications.

1. One God and Father of all

The basis of the first and greatest commandment, to love the LORD thy God, is that there is only one God (Deut 6:4-5; Mark 12:28-31; Mal 2:10; Eph 4:6; 1Tim 2:5), which excludes the existence of other gods and the worship of such (Exod 20:2-3; Deut 5:7; 6:14; Isa 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:5-6, 21; 1Cor 8:5-6). This first of all principles is the starting point for God's teaching on fellowship.

Basis for inclusion of the Gentiles. For example, it is the heart of Paul's argument for the Gentiles being included in God's covenant family:

"Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gen-

tiles also: Seeing it is **one God**, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith” (Rom 3:29-30; cf. Eph 2:11-13, 16, 18).

“How ye turned to God from idols to serve **the living and true God**” (1Thess 1:9).

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For **there is one God**, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1Tim 2:3-7).

Being the only true God, Yahweh is the source of unity, thereby implying that He has only one fellowship family.

The fellowship of God’s light. True Biblical fellowship means walking in God’s light:

“That which we [i.e., the apostles] have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have **fellowship** with us: and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ... This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is **light**, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have **fellowship** with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the **light**, as he is in the **light**, we have **fellowship** one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1John 1:3, 5-7).

These verses indicate that the apostolic fellowship into which we have been invited is with the Father, His son Jesus Christ, and our brothers and sisters. Further, they tell us that this fellowship exists in light. God is light, as are those He sends into the world to do His work: Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; cf. 1:4-9) and so are his disciples (Matt 5:14). Each of these emissaries shines forth the gospel light (2Cor 4:4-6; Rev 21:23; Matt 5:14-16; 13:43; Phil 2:15-16; Dan 12:2-3).

To be in fellowship we must walk in the light (1John 1:7), that is, we must live our lives ever conscious of God’s Word, which is light: “**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path... The entrance of thy words giveth light**” (Psa 119:105, 130); “**For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life**” (Prov 6:23). This light exposes evil:

“**And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproofed. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God**” (John 3:19-21).

Being in fellowship means our sins are exposed. If we hide in the darkness, it proves we are liars, only **pretending** to be in His fellowship. If on the other hand, we confess our sins to Him, then He is faithful to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, through Jesus Christ, our advocate, the propitiation for our sins (1John 1:8-2:2). This is an essential aspect of true fellowship.

There is no darkness in God, so those in His fellowship must have no fellowship with darkness: *“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light... and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”* (Eph 5:8, 11). *“What communion hath light with darkness?”* (2Cor 6:14). *“Ye are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night or of darkness”* (1Thess 5:5). Being in the Truth imposes constraints on who we fellowship. We must continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42). We must behave in ways consistent with our claim to be in the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and one another.

The fellowship of God’s love. Fellowship with God, with Christ, and with our brothers and sisters are intricately intertwined. You cannot have one without the others. John highlights these interconnections in his exhortation on love (1John 4:7-5:3):

- God’s love toward us is evident because He sent His only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him.
- God loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.
- God loved us, so we ought to love one another.
- If we love one another, God dwells in us, and we in God.
- You lie if you say you love God and hate your brother.
- If you love God then you love your brother.
- If you love God then you love the one who is begotten of God.
- We love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.

There is no such thing as an individual believer’s fellowship with God and Christ apart from that believer’s fellowship with their brothers and sisters.

There is one God and Father of all, and He has only one covenant family. God is light and He expects those in His fellowship to walk in light and to avoid darkness. Our lives are to be guided by the light of His word, which exposes evil and provokes us to confess our sins, for which He has provided propitiation through the blood of His son. Fellowship with God includes fellowship with His son and with our brothers and sisters. God, His son, and believers make up a community of mutual love.

2. One body

We break this section into the following three topics: ecclesial membership; ecclesial autonomy; and a community of ecclesias.

Ecclesial membership. Paul emphasizes that in Christ we form one body, each member belonging to the others: *“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others”* (Rom 12:4-5 NIV). We are one body because we all partake of the one bread which represents the sacrificial body of Christ: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are*

all partakers of that one bread” (1Cor 10:16-17). These passages apply to each ecclesia individually and also to all ecclesias collectively. In Christ, we all belong to the one body, we are all part of the one family of God, members of the one Church of God. Having a common set of beliefs is necessary, but not sufficient: we must also belong to the same community.

Being many members, we are nevertheless one body, without division:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit... That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1Cor 12:12-13, 25-27).

This metaphor of a human body emphasizes the corporate responsibility of each individual follower of Christ, who is identified with a community of believers, the body of Christ: we are many members, all in one body.

In fact, we are called into that one body:

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col 3:15-17).

We are called not only as individuals, but also into a community, the one body, the body of Christ. Being part of a community, we are to teach and admonish one another, and to worship together.

On the other hand, those who go out from us are no longer of us; that is, by going out they have left the one body:

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1John 2:18-19).

Those who go out from us are not of us, otherwise they would have continued with us. Their going out from us proves they are not of us. Christ's body has a crisp boundary; it does not have fuzzy outlines nor is it the intersection of overlapping circles. The message from Scripture is clear: the true fellowship community is represented as the body, the whole body, and nothing but the body.

“The inescapable conclusion... is that where the One Faith exists in two disjunct

[or distinct] communities, one of them for certain is not the One Body because the Unity of the Body has been severed and maintained in this sad state by deliberate choice and decision.”¹

Ecclesial autonomy. Central Christadelphians have repeatedly stressed the importance of ecclesial independence.² The basis for this insistence comes from the Bible.

Jesus gives step-by-step instructions on the process for dealing with offenses (Matt 18:15-20). The whole chapter (Matt 18) emphasizes that the goal is restoration. The first step is a private conversation, with the hope that he hears you and you have gained your brother. If he doesn't hear you, then you take two or three witnesses, so every word may be established. If sadly he refuses to hear them, then you take it to the ecclesia. Hopefully, he will hear it, but if not, then, and only then, do you treat him as a heathen and publican. The ecclesia's decision is treated as final: *“Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven... For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* At every step the goal is recovery. We highly recommend the article “Jesus' Instruction for the Ecclesia in Matthew” by Bro. Tim Young for an excellent exposition and discussion of this important passage.³

The process Jesus describes follows the pattern set out by God in the Old Testament. In particular, investigation of sin and reports of sin must necessarily be carried out locally:

- *“thou shalt enquire, and search, and ask diligently” (Deut 13:14; 17:4, 9).*
- *“at the mouth of two or three witnesses” (Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:16; 2Cor 13:1-2; 1Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28).*
- *“So shalt thou put evil away from the midst of thee” (Deut. 13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 22:21; 24:7); compare, “I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, [etc.]... with such an one no not to eat... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1Cor 5:11, 13).*
- *“All Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you” (Deut 13:11; 17:12-13; 19:20; 21:21; 31:12-13); compare, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1Tim 5:20).*

The importance of the local ecclesia in disciplining its own members is implicit throughout the New Testament. Paul wrote to many ecclesias (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians) and their leaders (Timothy, Titus). Even Jesus, in the Apocalypse, wrote to the seven ecclesias and their leaders. In each of these cases the ecclesia was responsible for correcting its members. Whether for their false doctrines or their ungodly behavior, the ecclesia was expected to take corrective action with respect to some of its members. If these ecclesias failed to take the recommended actions, appropriate sanctions would be taken by Paul or Jesus when they arrived. In all cases, the intention is to gain the brother or sister, to save the one who is lost; and also to protect those who remain.

On the other hand, the ecclesia is the believer's immediate spiritual family, and as such provides an oasis from the world, a place for healing and building up. Consequently, we must not forsake assembling together; we must receive one another; we must help one another, especially the least of Christ's brothers and sisters:

- ***“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25; cf. Col 3:15-17 cited above).***
- ***“Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom 15:7). “We... ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth” (3John 8).***
- ***“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me... Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me” (Matt 25:40, 45).***

The authority of the ecclesia explains why the New Testament places so much emphasis on the local leadership of the ecclesia:

- Bishops (*episkopos*): Phil 1:1; 1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9
- Deacons: Phil 1:1; 1Tim 3:8-13
- Elders (*presbuteros*): Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1Pet 5:1-5
- Those who rule over you: 1Thess 5:12-13; Heb 13:7

Qualified local leaders are essential because they oversee ecclesial affairs. We commonly call our ecclesial leaders arranging or serving brethren. Arranging boards are servants to their ecclesias; they play a critical role in the spiritual health of their members.

The importance of local leadership also explains the warnings concerning itinerant preachers:

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist... Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2John 7, 9-11; see also Matt 24:5; Acts 20:29; Gal 2:12; 1Thess 5:21; 2Pet 2:1; 1John 4:1-3).

Each ecclesia has responsibilities to its members and its fellow ecclesias. Ecclesias are responsible for their members: (a) disciplining sinners that they might repent, be forgiven, and ultimately be saved in the day of the Lord, and (b) protecting the rest of the ecclesia. First century cases requiring ecclesial discipline include the following examples:

- Walking disorderly, that is, working not at all:
“Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us... For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he

eat... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2Thess 3:6, 10, 14-15).

- Sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1-8): **“to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord”** (v5); and the consequent restoration (2Cor 2:6-8).
- Committing blasphemy: *“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1Tim 1:19-20).*
- Teaching things they ought not:

“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1Tim 6:3-5).

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:10-11).

- Causing divisions:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom 16:17-18).

“A man that is an heretick [i.e., divisive] after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11).

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3John 9-10).

Again, we emphasize that these issues must be dealt with locally.

“As long as the weak brother with off-beat ideas continues in the fellowship of sounder brethren there is some hope that by degrees he will achieve a more balanced point of view... But the necessary condition must be observed, ‘not to doubtful disputations’ [Rom 14:1]. If such a problem individual is to continue to share the blessings of the community, he must be prepared to cease all forms of propagation of the ideas he has espoused.

Only on these eminently reasonable terms can his membership of the family of Christ be tolerated.”⁴

A community of ecclesias. For multiple issues, Paul argues that there should be common practices “in all ecclesias”:

- “For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, **as I teach every where in every church**” (1Cor 4:17); “But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And **so ordain I in all churches**” (1Cor 7:17); “But if any man seem to be contentious, **we have no such custom, neither the churches of God**” (1Cor 11:16); “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, **as in all churches of the saints**” (1Cor 14:33).
- “For ye, brethren, became followers of **the churches of God** which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus” (1Thess 2:14); “So that we ourselves glory in you in **the churches of God** for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2Thess 1:4).

He also encourages the exchange of letters to Colossae and Laodicea (Col 4:16), presumably because each letter would apply to the other. The letter to the Galatians was explicitly sent to the ecclesias in that region (Gal 1:2). These exhortations were likely the initial reason for the early collections of Paul’s epistles; even though the letters were originally targeted at particular situations in particular ecclesias, they contained information relevant to all ecclesias, because all ecclesias were to share common practices.

Similarly, Jesus instructs believers to listen to his exhortations to all the ecclesias: “He that hath an ear to hear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you **these things in the churches**” (Rev 22:16).

This compilation of Bible passages describes a community of ecclesias, a community having common practices. Exceptions to the general community standards must be kept to a minimum; if not limited to truly unique and exceptional cases, then unity will be at risk.

Paul refers to the general ecclesia of God:

- “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to **the church of God**” (1Cor 10:32); “despise ye **the church of God?**” (1Cor 11:22); “God hath set some in **the church**, first apostles, secondarily prophets, etc.” (1Cor 12:28).
- “I persecuted **the church**” (1Cor 15:9; cf. Gal 1:13; Php 3:6).
- “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to **the church**” (Eph 1:22); “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by **the church** the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10); “Unto him be glory in **the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph 3:21).
- “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou ought to behave thyself in **the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground**

of the truth" (1Tim 3:15).

- "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of **the church** will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb 2:12; Psalms 22:22); "to **the general assembly and church of the firstborn**, which is written in heaven" (Heb 12:23).

Again, the implication is of a fellowship community beyond that of the local ecclesia.

Having grown to its current size through multiple reunions around the world, and through active preaching missions, Central Christadelphian ecclesias collectively form the largest such community today. Bro. Harry Tennant summarized the constraints on ecclesial autonomy arising from our participation in this larger community: "We have responsibilities to our brethren elsewhere since we claim their fellowship and wish to exercise ours in their midst. We cannot therefore claim autonomy without also bearing responsibility. We should not seek to exercise the one without the other."⁵

Section 41 of the *Ecclesial Guide* gives excellent practical advice on inter-ecclesia relations: "Involved in another Ecclesia's trouble... The simple law of Christ, to do to others as we would be done by [Matt 7:12], will greatly help us to take the right and wholesome course" (*Ecclesial Guide*, §41). See the whole section for Bro. Roberts' application of this principle to every step in the process. In general, the *Ecclesial Guide* summarizes Scriptural principles applied to fellowship practice. These have served the Central community well for over a century.

There is one body of believers. We are many members belonging to one another. Those who go out from this body exclude themselves from fellowship. The true fellowship community is represented as the body, the whole body, and nothing but the body. Membership in an ecclesia is essential. Our ecclesia is our spiritual home, providing encouragement always and discipline when necessary. The New Testament emphasizes the authority of the local ecclesia and the critical role played by our arranging boards. It also talks of a community of ecclesias with common practices; the Central Fellowship is the largest such community today. Our ecclesias are to govern themselves freely subject to the limits imposed by our common shared understanding of first principle doctrines as revealed in the Scriptures, of which the BASF gives a true definition.

3. One Lord

In all things concerning the ecclesia, both local and universal, we must always remember that Christ is the head. He is the source of our salvation. We are members of his body. We are subject to him. We are to grow into a maturity matching his. In short, we are sharing in his fellowship:

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of

water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:23-32).

“And he is the head of the body, the church... Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col 1:18, 24).

We are indeed blessed beyond measure by this wonderful mystery of Christ and us his body, especially when it involves sharing in his sufferings. We must ever be mindful that Christ is the head of our fellowship community. He is our Lord; we belong to him.

There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the head of the body. He is our master; we belong to him. He is the source of our salvation. He loved the ecclesia and gave himself for it. We are subject to him and his commandments. He is our example and we are expected to reflect his life in our lives. It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us.

4. One faith

God’s Word uses a variety of phrases to describe the one faith:

*“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of **the common salvation**, that ye should earnestly contend for **the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (Jude 3).*

*“To Titus, mine own son after **the common faith**: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 1:4).*

*“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).*

*“But speak thou the things which become **sound doctrine**” (Titus 2:1; cf. 1Tim 1:10; 2Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13).*

The pastoral letters have a series of faithful sayings, which appear to be quotations from a first century statement of faith:⁶

*“**This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance**, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1Tim 1:15).*

*“**This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance**. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is*

*the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe. **These things command and teach***" (1Tim 4:9-11).

***"It is a faithful saying:** For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him"* (2Tim 2:11).

***"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly,** that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. **These things are good and profitable unto men**"* (Titus 3:8).

For over a century the Central Community has used the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF) as our primary summary of the first principles of Bible truth.⁷ Other equivalent summaries are acceptable too, especially nowadays when English is not the first language of many of our brothers and sisters.

The fact that there is one faith, the common faith, the gospel of Christ, which is sound doctrine, implies that all others are false gospels, not to be condoned:

*"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth **another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or **another gospel**, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him"* (2Cor 11:3-4).

*"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto **another gospel**: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach **any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach **any other gospel** unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"* (Gal 1:6-9).

By exhorting us to exclude false doctrines and their teachers, Scriptures teach us to practice "closed fellowship." Here is a brief summary of the Biblical phrases used to describe this important doctrine:

- Unbelievers: have no fellowship, be ye separate, touch not (2Cor 6:14-17).
- Another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel: be not beguiled or corrupted, receive not, accept not, bear not (2Cor 11:3-4).
- Preachers of another gospel, perverting the gospel of Christ: let them be accursed (Gal 1:6-9).
- Teachers of other things, deceivers: withdraw, stop their mouths (Titus 1:10-11).
- Heretics (i.e., those who are divisive): reject (Titus 3:10).
- False prophets: try (1John 4:1-3).
- Any who bring not this doctrine: bid not God speed (2John 10-11).

Observing closed fellowship practices when we meet around the memorial table of our Lord is one way in which we obey the Scriptural principles just cited, that instruct us to separate ourselves from false doctrine. A group of people sharing the symbolic emblems of Christ in a formal setting signifies publicly and privately

a unified purpose. We are bound together in our mutually agreed consensus to believe and teach the same essential doctrines we call “first principles”. We avoid associating with beliefs and teachings that are wrong and dangerous to our salvation and to the salvation of our families and friends. This principle guides our personal conduct and our ecclesial conduct. It is the understanding that all our fellow ecclesias are seeking to uphold the same principles that binds us together in our worldwide fellowship community. “Each ecclesia is free to govern its own affairs up to the limits set forth in the scriptural principles summarized in our BASE, to which we have all given our willing assent.”⁸

There is one faith, the gospel, which is sound doctrine. All other gospels are false, which are to be rejected together with their teachers. We are to practice “closed fellowship,” restricting our community and our fellowship to those who share our common understanding of the first principle doctrines as revealed in the Scriptures.

5. One baptism

This section and the next [see next month] discuss our participation in God’s family. Those who are baptized into Christ become adopted children of God:

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant... when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son... To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal 3:26-4:7).

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 6:3-4; 8:14-17).

It is this family that delineates those who are in fellowship, those who are the children of God, those who are members of the body of Christ, those who partake of the bread and wine, those who are heirs with Christ of the promises.

This is the reason we call ourselves “Christadelphians”, that is, “brethren in Christ”. Through baptism we become “faithful **brethren in Christ**” (Col 1:2):

*“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one [i.e., one family]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them **brethren**, Saying, I will declare thy name unto **my brethren**, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:10-13).*

See also the many places in Acts and the epistles where believers are addressed as “**brethren**”.

There is one baptism. We are baptized into Christ, and by doing so become members of God’s family, heirs according to the promises. God is our Father, we are His children, and Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren. This is why we call ourselves “Christadelphians”, which being interpreted means “Brethren in Christ”. This family defines those who are in our fellowship community, those who are members of the one body of Christ, and those who partake of the bread and wine, the tokens of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf.

(To be concluded)

The Tidings Publishing Committee

Notes:

1. Bro. Harry Whittaker, “Block Disfellowship – Is it Taught in the Bible,” *Testimony*, 1973, p. 342.
2. See “Fellowship Practice of Central Ecclesias,” *Tidings*, December, 2008, pp. 534-535, for relevant citations from the *Ecclesial Guide* and *The Christadelphian* magazine.
3. *Tidings*, March-April, 2011, pp. 125-131, or <http://tidings.org/PE> [the capital PE is necessary].
4. Bro. Harry Whittaker, “Block Disfellowship,” *Testimony*, 1973, p. 344.
5. *The Christadelphian*, May 2006, p. 164.
6. For more information on the faithful sayings, please see “Faithful Sayings,” chapter 13.06 of *Bible Studies: An Anthology*, by Bro. Harry Whittaker, and “The ‘Sayings of Faith’ in the Pastoral Letters,” chapter 7 of *What are the First Principles?*, by Bro. George Booker.
7. See “Fellowship Practice of Central Ecclesias,” *Tidings*, December, 2008, for relevant citations from the UK Central-Suffolk Street Final Statement (p. 527), the Australian Unity Agreement (pp. 527-528), and the North American Berean-Central Jersey City Resolution (p. 530).
8. Bro. Ken Sommerville, *The Christadelphian*, June 2006, p. 204.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14)

Jesus lived through the whole range of human experience from birth to death, not as something external and dispensable as the Gnostics taught, but as the essence of divine truth. Human life was the means by which God chose to manifest Himself in His supreme revelation to men.

Sheila Harris

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel (10) Knowledge Will Increase

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4).

The dramatic increase in global knowledge and travel we are experiencing was prophesied over 2½ millennia ago. These are two of the signs of the times confirming the confidence of the enlightened in the approaching fruition of divine promises. It is curious how apostate Christianity has postponed these societal advantages for so long, by obstinately refusing to recognize the scientific truths of divine testimony.

The circle of the Earth

Poor Galileo was tortured by apostate Christian leaders, violently encouraged to renounce the inescapable conclusions of his scientific research. His astrophysical research and mathematics made the self-worshipping presumptions of the apostate Christian scientists of his day appear quite foolish. Not only was the earth round and not flat, the universe did not revolve around the earth but the earth revolved around the sun. Every form of false worship places oneself at the center of their self-glorifying universe. Every form of false doctrine degrades the Creator and exalts men in their own eyes, without exception. The politically powerful and wealthy don't appreciate lessons in humility. Yet anyone who could read the Bible would know that the earth was round and not flat. *"Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers" (Isa 40:21-22).* From the divine perspective (from any angle) Earth is a circle, therefore a globe. Anyone claiming the earth was flat would be declaring the Creator to be a liar or a fool. When science (the study of the features of creation) can finally stumble past the impediment of doctrinal distortions that contradict how creation projects divine truths, mankind always benefits. Science will always be at variance with apostate Christianity, because true science will only confirm divine truths and principles which exclusively glorify our Creator.

Draining away 'life' to heal?

Phlebotomy (draining blood) was practiced by supposedly Bible believing doctors of medicine for centuries for its supposedly healing benefits. George Washington, the first American President, had a dangerous amount of blood drained from him the last day of his life to resolve a horribly agitated throat. The Bible states perfectly clearly that the life of a person is in their blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11; Deut. 12:23). What intelligent mind, claiming to respect the Bible, could possibly conclude it

would be a healthy procedure to drain away their life in order to heal a diseased condition? Obviously this respected medical practice offered no respect for divine testimony concerning the features of creation. When doctors of science finally stumble onto divine truths, even oblivious of their spiritual implications, the benefits to mankind abound. Fortunately, science finally caught up to the testimony of the creator concerning the ignorance of draining away life blood in order to extend life. The spiritual lesson of the blood mirrors the creational features of the blood. Those who disrespect this relationship will always suffer for it.

The contagious nature of physical uncleanness and sin

Isn't it strange that men claiming to be Bible believers would not wash their hands between hospital surgeries? They either did not read the Bibles they supposedly believed, or had no respect whatsoever for divine testimony. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries doctors finally began to scrub between surgeries. All of a sudden the death rate at hospitals plummeted. God's laws made it perfectly clear that uncleanness (the physical effects of sin nature) is passed by touch (Lev 15; Hag 2:10-14). By the terms of the curse of sin and death, physical uncleanness was contagious. Whatever came in physical contact with an unclean person not only became unclean but became an uncleanness host...in the exact same way that disease is passed by touch. This condition resulted from the introduction of sin into a previously *very good* creative order (before the introduction of disease and death, as there were no contradictions to the Creator's right-ness... yet). Under the laws of the Kingdom of God an unclean person sitting on a saddle made that saddle unclean. Anyone touching that saddle prior to its cleansing became automatically unclean and anything they touched became unclean, just like disease. Interestingly, no one becomes healthy by touch and health is not contagious. However, everyone can become sick by touch. Although holiness can be achieved by touch it was not contagious. Whatever came in direct physical contact with the altar of burnt offering or the flesh of the sin offering became automatically holy (Exod 29:37; Lev 6:27). This law prophesied of how our Messiah (shadowed in the altar and sin offering) could reverse an unclean condition (leprosy, death, bodily issue) by his touch. Indirect contact meant nothing. God emphasizes this point through Haggai so that it should have been difficult for believers to miss (Hag 2:10-14). Despite this divine spotlight, 'Christian' scientists and doctors were oblivious to this creational principle until the microscope was invented. Lo and behold there were microscopic disease carriers being transferred by touch whose contagious transference could be halted by cleansing. Huffing and puffing, science finally caught up to a very basic lesson of divine law, about 3,000 years late.

A severe warning for missing the point

Emphasizing the significance of cleansing ourselves from an unclean physical condition was the severe divine judgment against anyone disrespecting this issue of physical uncleanness. If anyone refused to cleanse themselves from an uncleanness issue the community was instructed to ostracize that person forever, without any recourse of return (Num 19:13,20). While it does seem quite difficult to miss the divinely appointed significance of cleansing oneself following the touching of the

dead or a person with a bodily issue (etc.) it was millennia after these divine communications were given to men that mankind stumbled upon the scientific principle of the contagiousness of physical uncleanness and disease. Society still benefits even when the divine principles of creation are only viewed from a scientific perspective, oblivious to the truly meaningful testimony.

Although there is a great deal more we can consider under this theme, we will leave it for your meditational ‘cud-chewing’, moving on in our next commentary to a brief review of Dr. Mario Livio’s most recent book: **Is God a Mathematician**.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

The People of the Bible

Christians are faced with problems of meaning when they come to the Bible. God’s Word came in particular places, at particular times, to particular people. It is only as we stand in those people’s shoes and understand what God was saying to them that the words can have full meaning for us. Part of standing in their shoes is to understand the language in which the revelation came. This has been made possible for most Christians through the work of Bible translations.

The other aspect of standing in the shoes of Biblical people involves gaining a feel for what the terminology refers to. We can get such a feeling by placing ourselves back into the context of the Bible era’s homes, countrysides, and marketplaces...

The lifestyle of the people has also been recorded in words and artifacts, in pictures, and even in the rubbish of the past. It is through the study of such sources that it is possible to recapture something of how things were in Bible times.

The people of the Bible may have been conservative in attitude, but there was a richness and variation in their culture. Within the so-called Fertile Crescent, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, there was great variety. Life for the poor was not the same as life for the wealthy; life in the hot valley of the river Jordan was different from life in the cool mountains surrounding Jerusalem; life in summer was different from life in winter; life for the nomadic herdsman differed from life for an urban tradesman; and in a land that was subject to continual warfare, life was different under the occupation of the Assyrians from life under the occupation of Greeks and Romans.

Ralph Gower,

The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, p. 8

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Many Years, Many Lives

Bro. Duncan Sabean began teaching in the Meriden Sunday School in 1989, the year after he and Sis. Diane moved to Connecticut. Sis. Diane joined the Sunday school staff a year or two later. After teaching separate classes for a while, they joined forces and team taught for many more years. They have taught middle schoolers. They have taught beginning readers. Most recently they have won the hearts of our littlest children who flock around them with great admiration. Sunday school teaching has been a career occupation for them.



Bro. Duncan and Sis. Diane announced their retirement from teaching this year, and, at our end-of-year Sunday School Open House it all happened quite spontaneously: their former and present students who were in attendance rallied round for a group photograph. Included in the picture are two mothers with their children. One couple in the picture are engaged to be married. Also included are three young sisters who will, God willing, start their own careers as full-time Sunday school teachers next year.

When we teach the children, we don't just teach a curriculum. We teach who we are as disciples of Christ. Eight of the eighteen students in the picture are now brothers and sisters in the ecclesia. The eagerness with which they joined together for the photograph tells its own story of who our brother and sister are and who they have been as teachers in the Sunday school.

It occurs to me that the "Teacher's Prayer" is a fitting complement to this brief tribute:

*"I want to teach my students how to walk in God's pure way,
To live a life acceptable throughout each precious day;
Not just to learn the names of kings or how the crowds were fed,
But how to trust God's Holy Word wherever they may tread.
To understand eternal truth and God's great love to man,
To look to Jesus as their friend, and learn of God's great plan.
For if these nurtured ones do grow in wisdom and in grace,
Then I shall feel that I have tried to humbly fill my place.
And so I ask your guidance, God, that I may do my part,
To teach these precious jewels of Thine to love Thee with all their heart."*

The author of this poem is unknown, but each dedicated Sunday school teacher rewrites its meaning in his or her own life.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Notice

Do you have a Sunday school story to share?

I am looking for Sunday school stories to share in the pages of The Tidings Magazine. The stories can be about:

- a dedicated Sunday school teacher, past or present
- an exceptional Sunday school student, discretely identified or not identified at all
- a neat student project or service idea
- a teaching insight / an effective teaching strategy
- a successful Sunday school activity or extra-curricular activity
- how an ecclesia has reached out to neighborhood children
- someone who found the truth through the Sunday school
- the biggest challenge I ever faced in Sunday school
- the most amazing Sunday school class I ever had
- the best Sunday school lesson I ever learned ... or taught
- a great Sunday school program that we did
- smiley answers that kids have given to Sunday school questions
- etc.

If you have a story like this or know someone who has, please take a minute to let me know. I can follow up on it. Stories like these highlight the personal nature of our Sunday school work and are great to share. They make enjoyable reading and can give hard working Sunday school teachers fresh ideas and much needed encouragement.

You can contact me in any of the following ways. Thanks.

Bro. Jim Harper, Section Editor, The Joy of Sunday Schooling. sundayschool@tidings.org. (Apt. 14D, 145 Harbor Pond Drive, Meriden, CT 06450-3461, USA. Phone: 203-630-0210)

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship.

(9) Guideline # 8: “All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children” (Isa 54:13 ESV).

In deciding to have children a couple must realize this is not something to be taken lightly, because how we raise our offspring may have eternal consequences. The Apostle Paul made it clear to the Ephesians that having children is a great responsibility that needs to be handled with care. Consider again the advice that was given: “*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” (Eph. 6:4 ESV¹) Several important concepts are in this passage, which can be brought to focus in three key words: anger, discipline and instruction. Let’s consider each of these in turn.

Anger

The apostle’s advice is obviously aimed in this instance at the parents. It is almost impossible to raise children without conflict arising at one time or another. Conflict in child rearing invariably will lead to considerable unhappiness in the marriage relationship. When I was a young man I once mentioned to an elder brother that my wife and I wanted to have lots of children. He smiled and said he prayed that God would bless that wish, but if we were going to have children it would be wise to avoid having teenagers! The teenage years indeed proved to be the most difficult in raising our own children. It is a time when children are seeking to establish their own identity and also striving for independence. It is equally a time when the parents worry most about a number of things going too far too fast. The famous author, Mark Twain, told the story about how he was totally at odds with his father as a teenager until eventually he ran off to San Francisco, some 2400 miles from his family home in Connecticut. While there he started writing for a newspaper and as his skills as a writer grew he became fairly famous. At 21 years of age he decided to move back home and live with his parents while he tried his hand at being a full time independent author. On doing so his local friends were amazed and asked how he could possibly live home again given all the conflict with his father that caused him to run off to California some years earlier. To this Mark Twain supposedly replied: “*When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished by how much he’d learned in seven years.*”²

This story brings out an important point about parenting, namely, try to do the best job you can and while your child may not always appreciate it at the time — there is a strong possibility that someday they will.

Discipline

Now the challenge in child rearing is how to avoid frustration, anger, or simply losing one's *cool* while at the same time maintaining discipline. We have already discussed in a previous essay that corporal punishment could get parents in conflict with the law in many nations. Also, I suggest that it doesn't find accord with the gentleness displayed by Christ with regard to dealing with little children (see Matt 18:3, Matt 19:14 or Mark 10:14). In light of the teachings of Jesus, and of the apostle Paul, invoking Prov 23:13,14 as a justification for corporal punishment of children by parents makes as much sense as using Exod 21:23-25 (or Deut 19:21) to rationalize *an eye for an eye*, etc., as the kind of behavior we would find acceptable today. However, that doesn't mean a child should be brought up without firm discipline. A spoiled child is no honor either to their parents or to our heavenly Father. *"A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him"* (Prov. 17:25 see also Prov. 10, 15:20).

In a happy marriage both parents will agree that firm discipline coupled with love is critical to good child rearing. Below are some suggestions on how to apply firm discipline without resorting to any sort of physically abusive behavior. This not only has the potential of teaching a child that conflict is only resolvable by force, but also harbors the possibility that in the long term the child will grow to resent his or her parents. In observing a number of families, over the years, I have found that physical punishment by parents, especially if carried into the teenage years, has oft-times led to the rejection of the Truth when the child reached adulthood.

Here are some simple suggestions for applying firm, but loving discipline:

1. Parents should never discipline a child when they have lost emotional control themselves. Take a deep breath and count to ten before taking any action.
2. "Timeouts" are an effective way of limiting a conflict situation. Have the child stop playing (or whatever else they are doing) and tell them they need to sit quietly with the parent (or in a designated time-out place) until they have calmed down.
3. Limit privileges: this works at most ages. It can vary all the way from a youngster not playing with their toys for a period of time, to limiting a teenager's driving privileges.
4. Most disciplinary actions might be unnecessary if the child has a firm idea of the behavior expected of them in the first place. Teaching in advance the limits of behavior, and the consequences that will happen if not followed, puts the parent in control.
5. Set up a reward system for good behavior. If a child is told they can have ice cream (or play later with their friends, or whatever extra reward the parent can dream up) if they clean their room — the chances are they will clean their room with a minimum of fuss.
6. Give a child the reasons for the bounds set for the behavior expected. One possible scenario might go something like this: *If you drive too fast you become a traffic hazard and you endanger your life. We love you too much to see you harmed.*

7. In a happy marriage the husband and wife don't let the child play off one parent against the other. Parents need to be unified in their approach to discipline.

Using sarcasm and teasing as disciplinary tools are both inappropriate. They are neither funny nor kind, especially when dealing with children. They teach that those are acceptable forms of communication and behavior instead of plainly spoken honesty.

Obviously, these suggestions are not meant to be comprehensive. One could write a whole book on child discipline and indeed many have been authored. However, no better instruction manual has ever been written than the Bible. Parents who are guided by the Word in dealing with their children in a firm loving way will, without doubt, be more successful in bringing up their children than if they applied whatever is the latest fashion in child rearing philosophy currently circulating in the world.³ The salient point to remember here is that in a happy marriage both parents agree on the need and modes of discipline to be applied in every circumstance and above all they don't let the child play off one parent against another — a point that cannot be overemphasized. If that happens it is certain to sooner, not later, create trouble in the marital relationship.

Instruction

Let us move on to the Apostle's third key word "instruction". The greatest responsibility thrust upon parents is to nurture their children so that they are set on a life path that will lead them to the kingdom. A verse that every parent should be familiar with is Prov 22:6: *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."* This thought is amplified in Psa 119:33 *"Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end."* (ESV) and Prov 6:20 *"My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching."* Young children are like a book with blank pages waiting to be written upon. Our Lord Jesus Christ emphasized this point when he said: *"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt 19:14). As soon as children can articulate speech, parents should begin with including the Word of God as a teaching experience in every way possible.

Children can be more cognizant of what they observe in their parents behavior than what they are told to do. As they grow older they become all too quick to spot hypocrisy. If the parents are not respectful and loving towards each other it would be rare indeed for their children to be. When their parents faithfully attend Ecclesial functions, with unfeigned interest, their children will generally emulate such behavior. A home where the Word of God is a **daily** topic for reading and discussion is one that stands a good chance of producing children who will be engaged in the way of the Lord for their lifetimes. Speaking of the righteous the Psalmist says: *"...his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night"* (Psa 1:2). If one is fortunate enough to live in an Ecclesial area with a comprehensive Sunday school and an active CYC program the parents should certainly support it. They should also see that their children not only attend these functions, but the parents themselves need to be involved; not leaving the jobs of working with young people to be delegated solely to others to perform.

A question that has been often posed to me by parents is: How do I handle the controversy and divisiveness that sometimes raises its specter in our community, when my children become aware that such problems exist? Some parents feel they should protect their children by hiding, as best they can, any troubling Ecclesial issues. However, I have found this is probably not the best policy, because it underestimates the intelligence of our children. They will eventually find out that difficulties exist in Ecclesial life, and the last thing a parent wants is for their children to imagine they have been lied to, or have had facts hidden from them. Questions should be answered promptly, honestly and at a level the child can comprehend. How we treat each other as brothers and sisters during times of controversy speaks louder to the children, and to those around us, than anything else. Conflicts are inevitable, but the reaction we have to them is our choice.

Trust and problems

In a happy marriage the bond of absolute trust is an important part of the glue that cements the couple together. Similarly, contentment through trust is a bond that will knit together husband, wife and children as well into a happy family. The best policy is transparency; children should be made aware that *they should never confuse the 'Truth' with the people that happen to be in the Ecclesia*. The 'Truth' is from God, but we are still of the flesh and prone to sin. Being a Christadelphian does not in this present mortal state confer on us perfection. If our children are to grow up fully committed to the Ecclesial family they need to realize it is not *perfect*, because if it were we would not need redemption through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Children need to be prepared to stay the course and the best way to try to accomplish this goal is for their parents being steadfast. The words of the apostle Paul are particularly helpful in this regard: *"...he [Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister"* (Col 1:22-23).

Even in the happiest marriages, where apparently every good principle was carried out in raising children, one or more of the progeny may turn away from the Truth when they strike out independently on their own. Two things come to mind here — first don't give up in praying and tactfully doing your best to keep the light of truth shining when you are with them. One can never know what motivates the conscience of a person. I know of several cases where one sibling whole-heartedly accepted the Truth and faithfully lived it while another child of the same family walked away and apparently rejected the call to repentance. However, later in life, even after their parents had passed away, the prodigal child came back and accepted Christ and stayed committed till their demise. But even if a late in life acceptance is not the case, parents need to realize that even some of the most spiritual characters in the Scriptures were saddened by the behavior of their adult children. Eli is a case in point (1Sam 2:12-36) and Samuel is another example of a righteous man whose children failed to emulate their parent's righteous character: *"Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice"* (1Sam 8:3). As with Eli and Samuel disappointment in one

or more of our children may indeed be our trial too, but let it not affect a happy marriage by burdening it with guilt. A parent can only do so much; in the end judgment will be an individual matter (2Tim 4:8).

John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. All Bible References are from the ESV.
2. See <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/10/10/twain-father/>. This quote has always been attributed to Mark Twain, but since his father died when he was 11 years old either he said it in 'character' or he has received credit for almost 100 years for the work of some other clever, but unknown author.
3. Dr. Benjamin Spock authored the best selling child-rearing books that were very popular when we were raising our children. It has been much debated whether or not his seemingly permissive philosophy led to a whole generation of spoiled brats expecting instant gratification. (I never read any of his books — hence I have no personal opinion on the efficacy of his teachings.)

Forgiveness (7)

To a large extent, up till now these articles on forgiveness have focused on individuals and their relationships with one another. We have tried to give solid Bible-based counsel on the importance of forgiving those who have wronged us, as well as providing concrete advice on how to actually practice forgiveness, difficult as it is. We hope these ideas prove to be as helpful to our readers as they have been to us.

This final article looks at the issue of forgiveness on a bigger scale, cases where families or communities or nations need to forgive one another. We'll review several Bible examples, including Hezekiah's Passover, the unification of Judah and Israel, and the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles into God's covenant family through Jesus Christ. Then we'll draw some lessons from Desmond Tutu's book *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Finally, we'll close this article and the series with a prayer on behalf of the brotherhood.

Hezekiah's Passover

When Hezekiah determined to keep the Passover, he included all Israel and Judah; this fact is emphasized throughout the narrative (2Chr 30:1, 5, 10-11; 31:1).

This Passover became a festival filled with compromise. It was held in the second month (2Chr 30:2, 13, 15). Many in the congregation were not sanctified, having failed to cleanse themselves, especially those from the northern tribes, but they ate the feast anyway, contrary to the law (2Chron 30:17-18). They extended the feast an extra week, going beyond what the law called for (2Chron 30:23). Having shared the Passover together, everyone, including those from the north, returned to their own cities (2Chron 31:1).

Regardless, the spirit of the feast was acceptable to the LORD:

"Hezekiah prayed for the people, saying, The LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened unto Hezekiah, and healed the people" (2Chron 30:18-20).

Their hearts were in the right place, so God healed them and accepted their worship of Him. In fact, it was a wonderful experience for all, a Bible School extraordinaire:

“And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers” (2Chron 30:21-22).

We want to highlight the last item here (“*making confession to the LORD God of their fathers*”). The people came with the right attitude. They came with humility. Having their sins exposed, they confessed. There was great joy, and their prayers were heard by God:

“So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven” (2Chron 30:26-27).

What a wonderful scene. The disparity in the congregation was enormous, but there was unity of purpose — to celebrate the Passover, singing praise unto the LORD. Together they worshipped our heavenly Father in spirit and in truth, overlooking their diverse cultural backgrounds. In fact, they included those they knew were not clean. Instead of casting them out, Hezekiah prayed for them, asking God to pardon them. This is extreme inclusiveness.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the Psalms of the Sons of Korah (Psa 42-49; 84-85; 87-88), Psalm 89, and the Psalms of Asaph (Psa 50; 73-83) originated in the northern sanctuaries of Dan, Tabor, and Bethel, respectively, and that these psalms were adapted for use in Jerusalem.¹ It would take us too far afield of our topic to explore this claim in detail.² Suffice it to say that if it is indeed the case, then it provides another impressive example of inclusionary behavior on the part of the Jerusalem leaders to accommodate their northern brethren.³

Judah and Ephraim to be united

In the midst of the exile, the LORD commanded Ezekiel to act out a parable of two sticks (one representing Judah, the other Ephraim) becoming one:

“Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand” (Ezek 37:15-17).

The meaning of the parable is clear: the two nations, Ephraim and Judah, would become one:

“Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand... I will make of them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel... they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more” (Ezek 37:19, 22).

In particular, they would dwell in the Promised Land, having one king and one shepherd:

“Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land... One king shall be king to them all... And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd... And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever” (Ezek 37:21, 22, 24-25).

At the heart of this unification is the renewal of God’s covenant with His people:

“Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God... they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them... Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (Ezek 37:23-24, 26-28).

The exhortation for us is clear: if Yahweh is willing to rescue us from exile, we should be willing to unite with our siblings in His covenant family.

Jews and Gentiles in Christ

The first century ecclesia was stressed because in Christ, Jews and Gentiles had been called together into one united community:

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Eph 2:13-15).

This new covenant family was expected to worship God in harmony, with one voice. Following Christ, they were to be likeminded one toward another, having one mind and one mouth, receiving one another, Jews and Gentiles together glorifying God for His mercy:

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written [2Sam 22:50; Deut 32:43; Psa 117:1; Isa 11:10]” (Rom 15:5-12).

This was easier said than done because their cultures clashed, bringing severe conflict that regularly threatened the peace of the united community. For example, with respect to the kosher food laws and the annual calendar of Sabbaths, which way should it go? Should Gentile believers conform to Jewish standards, or should Jewish believers become apostate to their God-given law? If either of these extremes were required, the movement would almost certainly collapse in a war of opposing principles. Paul addresses the issue, exhorting against disputations, and instead insisting that everyone must be allowed to judge for themselves, fully persuaded in their own mind:

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” (Rom 14:1-6).

Earlier in the letter, Paul warns his Gentile flock not to boast against their Jewish counterparts, and not to become high-minded in their new privileged status:

“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

“Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which

is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (Rom 11:16-24).

Paul explains God's plan to include both Jews and Gentiles:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (Rom 11:25-32).

Again, the lesson for us is plain: we must not boast against our brothers and sisters who have come into the Truth through some path other than the one we have, and we must not be so high and mighty in our own status that we are cut off from the very thing we prize so much.

No Future Without Forgiveness

In 1984 Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize for his "role as a unifying leader figure in the campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa." In its citation for selecting Tutu, the Nobel Committee writes:

*"The means by which this campaign is conducted is of vital importance for the whole of the continent of Africa and for the cause of peace in the world. Through the award of this year's Peace Prize, the Committee wishes to direct attention to the non-violent struggle for liberation to which Desmond Tutu belongs, a struggle in which black and white South Africans unite to bring their country out of conflict and crisis."*⁴

In 1995 President Nelson Mandela named Tutu as Chairman of South Africa's newly formed Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In 1999 Tutu wrote a book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, recounting his experiences on the TRC:

"The establishment of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a pioneering international event. Never had any country sought to move forward from despotism to democracy both by exposing the atrocities committed in the past and achieving reconciliation with its former oppressors..."

"In No Future Without Forgiveness, Tutu argues that true reconciliation cannot be achieved by denying the past. But neither is it easy to reconcile when a nation 'looks the beast in the eye.' Rather than repeat platitudes about forgiveness, he presents a bold spirituality that recognizes the horrors

people can inflict upon one another, and yet retains a sense of idealism about reconciliation.”⁵

Tutu describes their approach, a third way between two unacceptable extremes:

“Our country’s negotiators rejected the two extremes and opted for a ‘third way,’ a compromise between the extreme of Nuremburg trials and blanket amnesty or national amnesia. And that third way was granting amnesty to individuals in exchange for a full disclosure relating to the crime for which amnesty was being sought. It was the carrot of possible freedom in exchange for truth and the stick was, for those already in jail, the prospect of lengthy prison sentences and, for those still free, the probability of arrest and prosecution and imprisonment.”⁶

He further explains the basis for this approach, a fundamental concept called *ubuntu*:

“...ultimately this third way of amnesty was consistent with... what we know in our languages as *ubuntu*... What is it that constrained so many to choose to forgive rather than to demand retribution, to be so magnanimous and ready to forgive rather than wreak revenge?

“*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say... ‘Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*.’ Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, ‘My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.’ We belong in a bundle of life. We say, ‘A person is a person through other persons.’ It is not, ‘I think therefore I am.’ It says rather: ‘I am human because I belong. I participate. I share.’ A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

“Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us... the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good. To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest.”⁷

There is much wisdom here. If such spiritually-enlightened ideas can be used in a political-charged minefield like South Africa after apartheid, then how much more should we be able to apply them to our situation?

Closing prayer

We conclude this series on forgiveness with the following prayer on behalf of the brotherhood:

Father, forgive us as we forgive others.
 We have sinned and fallen short of Thy glory.
 Hear our prayer, O God. Have mercy upon us. Cleanse us. Wash away our sins. Remove our transgressions. Blot out all our iniquities.
 Bless us, O LORD. Keep us. Let Thy face shine upon us. Be gracious unto us and give us peace.
 Create in us a new heart.
 We beseech Thee to join these two sticks that they might become one, that we might be no more two, that we might no longer be divided. Unite us for Thy name's sake. Let Thy servant Jesus, even the shepherd of the sheep, be king over us. Let us walk together in Thy judgments and observe Thy statutes, and do them. Establish the everlasting covenant of peace with us.
 Heavenly Father, restore the glory to Thy tabernacle, even to the body of Thy dear Son, the fellowship of the saints in whom Thou dwell. Sanctify us. Make us holy even as Thou art holy.
 We thank Thee for Thy loving-kindness, O LORD. We thank Thee for Thy many wonderful works. We will not hide them. We will declare Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation, so that all peoples might praise Thee, O LORD, for Thy goodness.
 In the name of Christ our Savior, who has loved us, and has given himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to thee for a sweet-smelling aroma, in his name we pray.
 Amen.

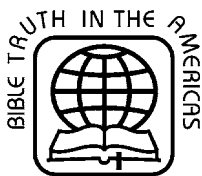
(Series concluded).

David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Joe Hill (Austin, Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. Michael D. Goulder (1982) *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press)*; (1995) "Asaph's History of Israel (Elohist Press, Bethel, 725 BCE)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (JSOT)* 65, 71-81; (1996) *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch: Studies in the Psalter, III (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 233; Sheffield: JSOT Press)*.
2. Note the geographic allusions in Psalm 42:6-7 (Mount Hermon, the hill Mizar, and the headwaters of the Jordan River, all pointing to the sanctuary at Dan) and Psalm 89:12 (Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon); and the references to God's people as Israel, Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh (Psa 73:1; 76:1; 77:15; 78:5, 21, 31, 41, 55, 59, 71; 80:1, 2, 5; 81:8, 11, 13).
3. Compare how many non-Christadelphian hymns have been included in our hymn books, sometimes with adaptation to make them more suitable or more relevant to our needs.
4. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1984/press.html
5. From the back cover of *No Future Without Forgiveness*, by Desmond Tutu.
6. *No Future Without Forgiveness*, p. 31.
7. *No Future Without Forgiveness*, p. 32.

"It is not at all incredible that a book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered" (Bishop Butler).



Bible Mission News

More Baptisms in El Salvador

"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14).



Bro. Nestor Garcia and Bro. Alex Anrade

Bro. Manuel and Sis. Silvia Fernández shared the following information. On June 24th the Christadelphians of El Salvador were delighted to witness the baptisms into Christ of two new brethren who meet with the Usulután Ecclesia. We were also very happy to have with us and carry out the baptisms Bro. Ed Binch, one of the brethren who periodically visit us from afar and encourage us to continue on the path to the kingdom.

The two new members are Alexander (Alex) Andrade and Néstor García. Néstor, a young man of 18, acquired his faith through his grandparents, Bro. Julio and Sis. Angélica García. Néstor has been attending the meeting since he was seven. Alex, 22 years old, came across the Truth in a somewhat novel way. He used to frequent a barber shop whose clients included several of the young brethren of the ecclesia, and so he couldn't help but hear them talking to the barber about different Bible topics and the growing ecclesia. The discussion caught Alex's attention and aroused his curiosity because from an early age he had attended an Evangelical church of which his grandfather was a pastor and his mother a member. When Alex began to mull over this new perspective on the Bible and to discover its true teachings, he decided that he should be attending the ecclesia, and before long he asked to study for baptism. Both young men gave a very good confession of their faith in their respective interviews.

A total of 33 persons, including seven relatives of Néstor, made the two-hour journey up to San Salvador from Usulután to witness the baptisms. Among them were the mothers of the new brethren; both very happy with the decisions their sons had taken; in fact Alex's mother has now begun to attend the Usulután Ecclesia along with him. Like the other young brethren and sisters in Usulután, Alex and Néstor are committed to reflecting the life and character of Jesus in order to attain eternal life. We thank God for this great blessing, seeing that He continues to take out a people for His name.

Yet two more young people have begun to study for baptism in Usulután. They are Wendy Carranza, 20, sister of Bro. Samael Carranza, and Johana Paola García, 18, granddaughter of Bro. Julio García. Both are enthusiastic Bible students and anxious to belong to the great family of the faith. We ask for all your prayers so that the servants of God may continue to multiply here in El Salvador.

The Usulután Ecclesia recently acquired its own property. Bre. Don Luff of Ontario and Douglas Hawthorne of Los Angeles were here in May to participate in the inauguration of the new hall. They also gave classes in the other two ecclesias in the country, Sonsonate and San Salvador. Their talks gave us much to reflect on regarding our spiritual life, and so we are very grateful to God for their visit.

The Usulután brethren and sisters have now instituted a regular Saturday CYC class. It is attended by many young people of the surrounding community, so that each week there is a group of about 12 students and six baptized brethren, who take turns giving the class. This has been a marvellous development, and in addition to attending the CYC class the young people have worked hard to repair and renovate the new premises for use by the ecclesia, which has given them a lot of satisfaction. Now the ecclesia has its own space for the edification of the body of Christ.

*For this is the will of God,
That by doing good you may put to silence
The ignorance of foolish men—
As free, yet not using liberty
As a cloak for vice,
But as bondservants of God.
Honor all people. Love the brotherhood.
Fear God. Honor the king.*

(1Peter 2:15-17)

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/C Publicity*

“Welcome to Jamaica — again!”

Checking in at the Toronto Airport for the flight to Jamaica, the airline agent informed me that my luggage was overweight by three kilos — I guess our scales at home are off a little! He told me there was a \$20 charge per kilo over, and then he asked me what was in the two suitcases. I explained that they contained Bible related books, booklets and study notes plus some children's books. He asked me if I was a “pastor” and I said “No — I am going to visit our churches in Jamaica and taking these supplies for them”. The agent proceeded to write a note in a small pad, tear out the page and insert it in my passport. He tagged the two cases, handed me my passport and boarding pass and said with a big smile, “May God bless you and have a good flight!” — so, I figured I better not ask any questions and get going! After I left the check-in counter, I read the note in my passport which said, “I’m also a Christian. Keep up the good work!”

Upon arrival in Jamaica, as usual, everyone had to clear customs and immigration. The agent reviewed my declaration card, and asked me about the purpose of my visit to Jamaica and what resort I was going to stay at. I explained that I was going to visit friends in their homes and attend some of our churches' activities on the Island. I then gave him the name and phone number of one of the families I was going to stay with. He swiped my passport and looking at the computer screen asked me if I had been to Jamaica before this year? I told him in February and May — I was starting to think that I was going to be asked to go into a little room somewhere for extra questions...! He then stamped both the passport and the declaration card, handed them back to me and with a big smile said — “Welcome to Jamaica — again!” I was getting the clear impression that this was going to be a good trip!

Our time in Jamaica was from July 18th to 25th. The first evening was spent with the Broughton Ecclesia around the study of the Book of Ruth. Ten sisters were in attendance, along with Bro. Patrick Johnson of the May Pen Ecclesia. He was helping with ecclesial activities, while the recording brother, Bro. Ray Arthurs, was recovering from detached retina surgery. The next day (July 19th) Bro. Patrick and I went to the Argyle Mountain Ecclesia for a Memorial Service — this was all part of the scheduled arrangements by the CBMJ. The normal attendance of six sisters and one brother welcomed us around the Table of the Lord. Bro. Siswe Stephen of this ecclesia and members of other ecclesias also visit the few members in isolation of the Norwood Ecclesia about 90 minutes from Argyle Mountain, as often as they can.



Back row: Bro. Patrick Johnson (May Pen Ecclesia), Sis. Maxine Thompson-Brown, her daughter Stephanese, Sis. Icyline Grant, Sis. Janetta Campbell

Front row : Sis. Vera Gordon and Sabrina Brown (another daughter of Sis. Maxine).

Friday and Saturday (July 20th and 21st) the Spanish Town Ecclesia held preaching activities each evening. The first evening's topic was "Wealth and Prosperity" — many churches stress tithing and that the result will be God's blessing of riches — but the lecture stressed the principle of "contentment", and giving not receiving (Acts 20:35). "The Kingdom of God on Earth" was the second evening's topic. Although the newspaper ad was published later than planned and less handbills were distributed than anticipated, a number of visitors attended both events. The response encouraged the members of Spanish Town to implement the plans earlier next time. One man named Horace (in his mid-50's) had attended "youth circle" (as he called it) up until he was eight years old at the former Lances Bay Ecclesia. His family moved and he lost contact with the Christadelphians. He is now in touch with Bro. Keith Kinlocke, recording brother of the Spanish Town Ecclesia. We ask for your prayers that after all these years Horace may come to know the Truth!

We enjoyed fellowship around the Lord's Table at the Kingston Ecclesia on Sunday, July 22nd — the theme of the exhortation was "The Eyes of the Lord". The meeting hall is very spacious, indicating a sizeable ecclesia in the past, but sadly, like most ecclesias in Jamaica, this ecclesia is smaller now, mainly due to emigration to other countries. Up to 12 members attend the Remembrance Service on a regular basis. In the evening of the same day, a special Bible Class was held at the May Pen Ecclesial Hall on the theme of "The Potter and the Clay" with good audience participation for the readings by adults and children alike!



Left to right: Coreen Thomas, Kay Brown (Broughton), Simone & James Samuels (their 2 sons in front), Garfield Carter, Davion Sinclair, Jennifer Kelly (in front of Davion), Neville Beckford and Judith Frazier (in front of Neville).

Brothers and sisters present Sunday, July 22 at Kingston Ecclesia. This was taken in front of the entrance doorway. Bro. Davion is the recording brother.

On Saturday, July 21st, a Sisters' Study Day took place in the Port Maria Ecclesial meeting room at Sister Dorothy Isaacs' home and close to 20 sisters were in attendance from six ecclesias. The theme for the day was "A Mother's Love" — studies on three mothers' relationships with their sons were presented — Jochebed and Moses; Rebekah and Jacob; and Mary and Jesus. Packages of the books, booklets and study notes (which were requested at the Mutual Improvement Day in May) were taken to this gathering, so that sisters could take them back to their home ecclesias for distribution — the Christadelphian courier service!

During Monday and Tuesday (July 23rd and 24th) we spent time with members of the Kingston, May Pen and Broughton Ecclesias — enjoying hospitality, good food and fellowship in their homes and around Bible study.

We do thank all the Jamaican brothers and sisters for their warmth and kindness during our stay. We were pleased at the order and protocol observed by the members during the different ecclesial meetings we attended.

CBMC representative, Don Luff

Our Heritage — The Caribbean



After a period of many years, Bro. Ashraf Ali, originally from the New Amsterdam Ecclesia in Guyana, and now a member of the Manhattan, New York Ecclesia, was blessed with the privilege to revisit ecclesias in Guyana, Trinidad, Tobago, Barbados and Jamaica, from June 23rd to July 10th. This is his account of the love and fellowship shared with our Caribbean brothers and sisters:

In exhortations we dealt with the Apostle Peter, a brother we can relate to, and how our Lord, the Master builder, worked on his weak character to make him into an unshakeable pillar and indefatigable worker in the early church. In Bible classes we demonstrated how John chapter 1:1 can have infinity of applications in the light of which the burgeoning Christadelphian interpretations of John's writing, especially the book of Revelation, should engender unity instead of conflict.

In Guyana I was euphorically happy to attend the New Amsterdam Memorial Service and to conduct Bible classes in New Amsterdam and Kilcoy. In Trinidad I had a refreshing stay with Bro. Sam's family and conducted a Bible class at Sam's house where meetings are kept. In Tobago we had a marathon session with the Memorial Service and Bible class on Sunday as we do in Manhattan.

I was happy to be in Barbados, the gem of the Caribbean, and the home of brethren and sisters to whom we will return, God willing, next year. There in Barbados we had a Bible Class at the Christadelphian Hall and in Jamaica we had a wonderful Memorial Service in the Kingston Hall. Many years ago we made the rounds of the ten ecclesias of Jamaica and we hope to repeat that feat through God's grace.

I would like to thank all our brethren, sisters and friends in our Lord Jesus Christ for a refreshing visit to the Caribbean. I was particularly impressed by the brethren and sisters of the Tobago Ecclesia. We had a lengthy Memorial Service, a very short break and then a lengthy Bible class. Throughout these activities we had the full attention of the entire congregation ranging from children to elderly brothers and sisters. Such a splendid day was well spent in the Lord's service!

We pray that the words of our Master in Revelation 3: 10 will apply to us and to the Caribbean Ecclesias as we strive for excellence in His service:

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the entire world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

If there are brothers and sisters in the Caribbean who would like a visit from brother Ashraf, please contact CBMC — Bro. Phil Snobelen (philsnobelen@shaw.ca).

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau,
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

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. \$10.00 US (372 pages, 2010)

How to Order

Online — www.tidings.org (Go to Books). E-mail — books@tidings.org. Mail — Tidings Books, 11659 Caves Road, Chesterland, OH 44026. Shipping & handling costs 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)

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BOSTON, MA

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Sis. Alicia Warner on August 6, 2012. She was eighty-two years old. She now rests peacefully, awaiting the Lord's call to life again at his return.

We would like to thank our Bro. Dan Wilkinson (Worcester, MA) for his recent exhortation on our behalf.

Jim Sullivan

CAMBRIDGE, ON

It is with great joy that we announce that on August 12, 2012, ROB COUSENS, son of our Bro. Gary and Sis. Amy Cousens, put on the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism. The ecclesia rejoiced along with his parents and grandparents in this happy occasion.

We also rejoiced in the June marriage of our Sis. Verity Cotterell to Bro. Joel Suntz (Hamilton McNab). We pray that the Lord will bless them as they walk together toward His glorious kingdom.

Additionally, our ecclesia has been blessed with the addition of several babies: David Caetano, born to Bro. Andy and Sis. Sharon; Jacob McKay, born to Bro. Steve and Sis. Cheryl; Lydia Abel, born to Bro. Johnnie and Sis. Beth; Joah Hale, born to Bro. Jochem and Sis. Emily; and Kendall Glen, born to Bro. Andy and Sis. Allison. Our ecclesia rejoices in these future additions to our Sunday school.

Since our last correspondence we have welcomed by transfer the following members to our ecclesia: Bro. Paul and Sis. Sue Brokaw from the Kitchener-Waterloo, ON Ecclesia; Bro. Philip and Sis. Sharon Krakar from the Brantford, ON Ecclesia; and Sis. Lesley Hagar from the Ottawa, ON Ecclesia. We pray these members will be strengthened together with us as we walk toward the kingdom of God.

We would like to thank the many brothers who have labored on our behalf over the past months with exhortations, lectures, Bible classes and, in particular, our Bro. Mike Robinson (Echo Lake, NJ) who spoke at our May study day. The undersigned has now assumed the duties of recording brother for the Cambridge Ecclesia. Ecclesial correspondence may continue to be directed to our ecclesial mailing address or by email to kurt.ruhland@gmail.com.

Kurt Ruhland

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We sorrow with our Bro. Sam Arabia and his family in the loss of his grandmother who was a member of the Advocate fellowship.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, and David and Maryann Jorgensen

(Union, NJ); Jeremy and Laura Morgan (Cardiff Museum Place, UK); David and Liz Perry (Washington DC); Tom and Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); Jean Drepaal (South Florida, FL); and Ashraf Ali (Manhattan, NY).

Stewart Marsden

GRANITE STATE, NH

We are very happy to announce the baptism of another of our Sunday school students. On July 28, 2012, TIM DIZEFALO, son of Bro. Roger and Sis. Gail DiZefalo put on the saving Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been very blessed as this is our third baptism this year! We pray that Yahweh will bless the walk of our new brother, keeping him in the way of salvation and bringing him into His kingdom. It is so encouraging to see the hand of God working in the lives of young people, touching their hearts with His love, and drawing them to Himself in the hope of salvation. May the day of the Lord soon come, that our hope in Christ be realized, and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

Steve Smith

HONESDALE, PA

We are sad to report that beloved Sis. Esther Dunn went to sleep in the Lord on August 1, 2012. She will be sorely missed but we hope to meet her in the kingdom of God. She was born in 1930 and was baptized in 1944. Bro. Jim Harper and Bro. David Stiles (Meriden, CT) conducted the services.

The angels rejoice at the baptism of BARBARA TERREL by Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) on August 12, 2012, at Welcome Lake, PA. Bro. Steve also gave us an excellent exhortation at our service, followed by our annual picnic put on by our fine cooking sisters. We were also glad to have many visitors, especially from the Moorestown Ecclesia.

Stephen DeMarco

ORLANDO, FL

With much sadness, we report that our dear Sis. Nancy Sanfilippo passed away on March 31st after a brief illness. Sis. Nancy was much loved by her large family and by her brothers and sisters in Christ. She will be sorely missed.

On a joyous note, Bro. Tommy and Sis. Natalie Sanfilippo were blessed with the birth of a baby boy, Joshua Ross Sanfilippo, on March 6, 2012. Joshua was the fourth grandchild of Sis. Nancy and Bro. Joe Sanfilippo. Joshua weighed eight pounds eight ounces! He has been a delight to all in our little ecclesia.

The following brothers and sisters attended our meeting over the last few months. Many thanks to those brothers who exhorted. Alan Markwith (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Alan and Sandra Walker (North Bay, ON), Sara Fallahi (Jacksonville, FL); Stephen and Betty Lou Lewis (Largo, FL); Roger DiZefalo (Granite State, NH); Julian and Sandra Baseley (Guildford, UK); John, Joanne and Jesse Andrew, and Tom and Vivian Thorp (Hamilton Greenaway, ON); Peter and Pat Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI).

Randy Davenport

SARASOTA, FL

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. The Sarasota ecclesia has been deeply saddened by the sudden falling asleep in Christ of our beloved Bro. Ron Badlu.

He was a wonderful, always cheerful brother with a great love for the brotherhood worldwide, a willingness to help those less fortunate, and a growing appreciation for God's word. He served this small ecclesia in several capacities, and his loss is keenly felt. May the great hope of the resurrection which we share strengthen us all in this time of sorrow. The sympathy of this ecclesia is extended to the Badlu family.

James L. Wilkinson

SUSSEX, NB

We are sorry to report the falling asleep on August 13, 2012, of Sis. Arla Easson following a struggle with cancer. Our sympathies are with Bro. Ron and their sons, Bre. Kenneth and Sis. Nipun, and Gordon Easson; and her brothers, Bre. Dennis and Theo Readman. We will miss her for her extensive Bible knowledge but look forward with hope to the day of resurrection.

The following brothers and sisters and families have visited us recently: Dale, Carol and David Crawford, Ken and Wendy Dickson, Michael Buxton-Carr and Steve Snobelen (Bedford, NS); Ken and Nipun Easson, Gordon Easson (Toronto East, ON); Theo and Joy Readman (North Battleford, SK); Josh and Amanda Robinson, (Kitchener Waterloo, ON).

Cliff Baines

TOLEDO, OH

It is with sorrow that we report the falling asleep in the Lord of Bro. Jim Quick. He died unexpectedly on Friday, August 31, 2012. Bro. Jim was a tireless worker in the truth, always enthusiastic, and confident in the soon return of our Lord.

We also would like to thank our recent visitors, and brothers who have encouraged us with words of exhortation: John and Jessie Brinkerhoff, John Bilello, Matt Bilello, and Ken Burcaw (all of Ann Arbor, MI). We also thank Sis. Mary Bilello for her assistance on the piano.

Bro. Ken Henzler recently had hip replacement surgery and is recovering nicely.

Doug Henzler

WORCESTER MA

Sadly, we must announce that our beloved Sis. Lucille Gifford has fallen asleep in the Lord at age ninety-six. She was a member of the body of Christ for over seventy-five years and was our ecclesial organist for thirty-five years. We look forward to seeing her again in the kingdom, Lord willing, and may He strengthen her family in this time of loss.

Gladly we are pleased to note the baptism of NAOMI THERIEN, daughter of Bro. Denis and Sis. Cindy Therien, into the saving grace of Christ. May the Lord bless her as we await Christ's return.

CAMP HASHAWHA FAMILY BIBLE STUDY WEEKEND

The Washington, D.C. ecclesia extends a loving invitation for all to attend our family Bible Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. The weekend is planned,

God willing, for November 23-25, 2012. Bro. Richard Morgan of the Book Road, Hamilton, ON ecclesia is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled “The Pattern of the Tabernacle”.

Bible classes for all ages will be held Saturday and Sunday beginning at 8:45am. A nursery for those four and under is available. Sports, daily readings, discussion group, an evening program and campfire hymn sing are planned for Saturday. Sunday School, Memorial Service and lunch complete the weekend on Sunday. Mail registrations to: Bro. David Fertig, 9703 Schmidt Drive, Burke, VA 22015. For forms or information, phone: 703-644-6311 or e-mail Bro. Dave at Hashawha@gmail.com.

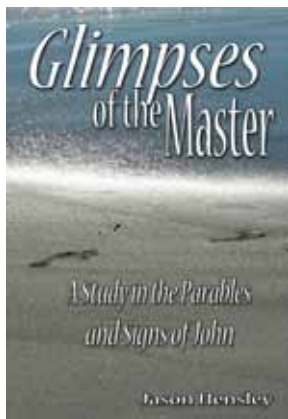
ECHO LAKE HELPING HANDS

On behalf of Echo Lake Helping Hands we would like to thank Southern New Hampshire Ecclesia for joining us in making no sew blankets for the Christadelphian Jewish Relief headed by Bro. and Sis. Griffin (UK), and collecting school supplies for the Christadelphian Save the Children Fund headed by Bro. and Sis. Birchall (Canada). We wish to thank Sis. Edith Machado for coordinating this effort, and the Union Ecclesia.

If any ecclesia would like to help in any way, please contact the following: Sis’ Janet Owens at: 732-583-4184 or Marie Washington at: 732-381-4590

Stewart Marsden

GLIMPSES OF THE MASTER



This is a new book about the gospel of John by Jason Hensley. Throughout his gospel, the apostle only recorded eight major miracles performed by the Lord. Each of those miracles was written so that John’s readers might be convinced of the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, and in that belief come to him and find life (John 20:31).

This book was written to tell the story of those eight signs. It was written to make the narrative of John’s gospel come alive, and then to go deeper into the symbolic, or parabolic meaning of each one of those miracles. In every case, the symbols of the sign come together to powerfully demonstrate that the Lord Jesus came to bring true life, and that this true life can only be found in him.

The book is now available from: the Thousand Oaks Christadelphian Library; www.christadelphianlibrary.com; Amazon.com; and Amazon Kindle.

Jason Hensley

*I need not shout my faith. Thrice eloquent
Are quiet trees and the green, listening sod;
Hushed are the stars, whose power is never spent;
The hills are mute: yet, how they speak of God!*

Charles Towne

Minute Meditation

Seek First the Kingdom

The daughter of one of our employees was a contestant recently in the Miss America Beauty Pageant. She placed, but the third runner up for Miss California does not receive a crown. Only the winner is crowned.

As we write this article, the summer Olympics have just finished in London, England. It is an interesting fact that London is the only city to have had three Olympics in its history. The stark reality that all those hundreds of participating athletes had to face is that in the Olympics just the top three winners are given medals, and only one wins the gold.

The Olympics in Paul's day were also well known; they had been celebrated every four years for hundreds of years, and would be held for many more centuries. Only the winner was recognized, as Paul points out, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." The Olympic winners in Paul's day were given a crown of leaves to wear, a crown that would wither and fade in time. Like the crown, the memory of who those winners were has also largely faded.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul compares his race to the kingdom with an athlete competing in a race: "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

Think of the thousands of athletes that have trained, often for years, just to compete in Olympic Games. They certainly can say that they did not run aimlessly but that they trained their bodies to compete for the prize they sought. Many gold medals were awarded in the various sports, and just like the runners in Paul's day, only one in each event got the top prize. A few milliseconds often can be the difference between top honors and bitter disappointment.

How different the Olympics are compared to the race that we are engaged in. Every one of us is a participant in the race for eternal life, and it is God's good pleasure to give all of us the greatest prize ever offered to mankind. We all can be winners. God actually wants each of us to be in His kingdom. He wants us to live forever. The prize will not fade, and we will not be forgotten.

If we are not accepted, it certainly won't be His fault, nor the fault of His Son who gave his life so that we could be there. As Jesus tells us: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Peter confirms the words of Jesus when he explains, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward,

not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” As incredible as it may seem, our Lord God, the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, wants us to be saved and live eternally, and has made vast preparations for us to succeed and to be in His kingdom, which He has prepared for those that love Him.

Sadly, those who will be rejected at the return of His Son from heaven will be those who did not actually want to be in the Kingdom: that is, they did not want it badly enough to give it top priority. There will be something in their lives that they have wanted more than the kingdom. If the kingdom is not first in our life, it makes no difference where it ranks because we will not be granted admittance unless it is absolutely first. Certainly we have needs — food, clothing, homes, and other things, but Jesus tell us to seek first the kingdom of God and then all these other things will be added unto us.

Have we considered what takes up our time each day — the things of the world or the things of the kingdom? Jesus did not say that we should not serve both God and mammon. He said that we cannot. It is a sobering exercise to keep a log of our activities and consider the number of minutes we devote each day to serving our God. We make it obvious what we truly love to be doing because that is what we do with our free time. What are we saying about our priorities when we choose our activities?

Serving our God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, cannot play second fiddle to our other interests, and they know clearly right now where we have ranked serving them in our everyday lives. Let each of us resolve to put the kingdom first in our thinking and in our doing.

How thankful we are that our Heavenly Father and His Son want us in the kingdom. All we have to do is make sure that our goal is the same as theirs and make seeking the kingdom of God first in our lives. We pray that we will hear those longed for words from the lips of our Lord: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Robert J. Lloyd

*No man is an island entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main;
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less,
As well as if a promontory were,
As any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in Mankind;
And therefore never send to know
For whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.*

John Donne

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

OCTOBER 2012

- 5-7 Midwest Christadelphian Young Couples Weekend** will be held at the Garland Resort in Michigan. The purpose of the weekend is to help couples grow and develop in the Truth by drawing on the wisdom, comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures. The content of the weekend is geared toward finding balance between family, ecclesia, work etc., with additional focus on raising a godly family and relationships with extended family. There is an informational power point presentation available for download on www.mcycw.com. Contact Annalee Cooper registration@mcycw.com
- 5-7 Washington, DC** Music Study weekend. Theme: "Make the Voice of His Praise to be Heard!". Study leader will be Bro. Phil Munday (Bournemouth Winton, UK). Please join us for an uplifting weekend of studies, song, and praise, based around glorifying God in our music. Friday evening, 7:30pm, Baltimore hall. Saturday and Sunday, Washington DC ecclesial chapel. Contact Bro. David Perry dperry1@gmail.com 410-303-8632.
- 6-7 Atlanta Area, GA** Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON).
- 6-7 Sussex, NB** Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD).
- 13-14 Echo Lake, NJ** Fall Study weekend. The speaker is Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) and his subject is "Promises of the Kingdom".
- 20 Barrie, ON** Fall Study day. The theme is, "Modern Challenges for 21st Century Disciples". Subtitles will be "In the world", "In the State", and "In the Ecclesia". For more information please contact Bro. Bruce Abelby 519-925-5297 or bnb69abel@hotmail.com.
- 27 New England Little Disciples Gathering** a day of Bible study and activities on Peter for children Pre-K to 7th Grade. Location is Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA. Contact www.nelittledisciples.com email nelittledisciples@hotmail.com.

NOVEMBER 2012

- 9-11 Brothers' Weekend** at Hidden Acres, New Hamburg, ON. An excellent opportunity to stimulate faith and build brotherly love through which our families and ecclesias can be strengthened; all for the glory of God. Bro Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Theme: "Get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." For information Bro Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 or email natejbadger@gmail.com.
- 10-11 Largo/Orlando/Sarasota, FL** Study Weekend. Speaker Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX). Theme: "As A Man Thinketh In His Heart." Lunch will be provided both Saturday and Sunday. Contact: Bro. Walt Dodrill/Largo at waltdodrill@msn.com or call 727-410-0896.
- 10-11 Pittsburgh, PA** CYC Study Weekend. Bro. Everett Muniz (Paris Ave, OH) will be speaking on "Holy Living in Perilous Times". Contact Sis. Becca Pommer at (724) 757-8582 or pghecclesia@gmail.com.
- 10-11 Victoria, BC** Fall Study Weekend. "Defining the Household" by Bro. Wesley Butler (Vancouver, BC), Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC), and Bro. Simon Snobelen (Vancouver, BC). For further information contact csnobelen@csll.ca.

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23-25 Washington, DC Family Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead us in classes entitled "The Pattern of the Tabernacle". Weekend fee is \$60. A \$20 deposit is required with registration. Deadline is November 12. Mail registrations to Bro. Dave Fertig, 9703 Schmidt Dr., Burke, VA 22015. For forms or information, phone 703-644-6311 or e-mail Bro. Dave at Hashawha@gmail.com.

25 Ann Arbor, MI Thanksgiving Gathering at Ann Arbor Holiday Inn, 3600 Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105. Memorial Service 11am and Lecture 2pm. Lunch will be provided. Speaker: Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD).

DECEMBER 2013

29-Jan 5 Texas Youth Conference at T4C near Freestone, TX. The Texas Youth Conference is a Bible Study Conference for young Christadelphian adults who are between the ages of 17 and 35. Baptized members under the age of 17 may attend. For registration and other information please see our web site at www.texasyouthconference.com.

FEBRUARY 2013

24-Mar 1 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales) and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 75

November, 2012

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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THE TAKING OF OATHS

S. P. W. The state of the law is now such that there need be no difficulty in connection with the question whether the law of Christ allows his brethren to take oaths in a court of justice or elsewhere. If a brother has a doubt, he need not take the oath, the law now allowing of simple affirmation in case of conscientious scruple. On the general question itself, and also in answer to a question by J. R., on the meaning of the commandment not to take the name of the Lord in vain, we introduce to notice the following communication from brother Hayes, setting forth an article on the subject by the father of Dr. Thomas.

Torquay, Feb. 9th, 1872.

Dear Brother Roberts. The enclosed ms. on the subject of oaths is an exact copy of an article written more than twenty years ago by Dr. Thomas' father, and sent to me with a letter of which I have also enclosed a copy. My refusal to take an oath in a court of justice on conscientious ground, was the occasion of its being written. It satisfied me that I had been in error on the point, and it has struck me that it is worthy of a place in The Christadelphian; and if you are, after perusing it, of the same opinion, you will perhaps find room for it in your next issue. It might be the means perchance of saving some from falling into the same dilemma that I did, and from which I escaped not without a reprimand and the loss of a fee.

Samuel George Hayes (Christadelphian 1872 p. 279)

Editorial

Swear Not

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all:... But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt 5:33-34, 37)

Swear not at all

The background to this commandment by Jesus is quite relevant today. The command by Moses: *"Thou shalt...swear by His Name"* (Deut 10:20) was ruthlessly interpreted by the Jews of Jesus' time as meaning that any oath not addressed directly to the Almighty - *"thine oaths unto the Lord"* (v. 33) - need not be regarded as binding. It provided a splendid device for deceit in any sort of deal, or indeed any commitment. The answer to this subterfuge was a rigorous embargo on all misuse of holy language, and indeed on all forms of swearing in speech: *"I say unto you, Swear not at all"*

It was all part of a way of life which had become so familiar as to be taken for granted, sanctioned and even encouraged by the Pharisees (Matt 23:16-22). The simple statement of truth was deemed inadequate. It must be reinforced with the strongest possible oath and with the most flamboyant language available. Thus they diluted the power of words and tampered with men's sense of truthfulness. If you must emphasize your point, Jesus said to simply say it twice: say "yes, yes". (Note I disagree with the vast majority of the modern translations, who all have something very similar to *"All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil [one]"* (Matt 5:37 NIV).)¹

This reflects a common problem: down through the ages people have sought to find some way of ensuring the statements or commitments are "guaranteed" — at least in view of those making the declaration. There was a time when it simply served, in certain circles, to say "I give my word of honor". No-one would doubt such a declaration, and it was virtually unknown for anyone to doubt the sincerity, or retract such a commitment, once made. To do so would be to be cast out of society — a terrible penalty.

And even in our time, in most circumstances "oral"² agreements are enforceable at law, at least in the USA. There was a famous "handshake" agreement between two oil companies, one of which subsequently received a better offer and reneged — which cost them \$10 Billion US. And in many local areas significant contracts are made by a handshake, because no local businessman would dream of breaking such a contract, less he lose the respect and trust of the local community.

But why am I telling such stories? I am not going to recount how we observe the commandment of Jesus in our interaction with the local authorities and legal profession: we normally never "swear", but affirm rather. (It is a sad commentary

on our times that the witness in court who for religious reasons chooses to affirm probably carries more weight in his testimony than the one who takes the oath.) It is rather the increasing modern tendency, even within our own community, to doubt the statements of our fellows, even brethren or sisters. How many times have I heard doubts expressed whether or not a certain statement was in fact a true expression of a person's belief, or heard the statement twisted into a meaning that was clearly not intended. Or have heard "sound bites" used, again out of context, to cast doubt on the veracity of the speaker.

It is clear we need to be careful in all our statements in public. But, it is also clear that when we want to make a point, and ensure we are prepared to stand behind it, here in the verse from Matthew we have a clear guidance. The use of a double emphasis is intended to make sure the hearer understands the import of the statement, and that the speaker will stand behind it. Use with care. But when used, as disciples we should trust that the statement is a true expression of someone's belief, and neither doubt it, nor cast doubt that it is really meant.

However, this is not the only Scriptural example of emphasis. Time and again in his epistles the apostle Paul expressed himself by an oath of the most impassioned kind:

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 9:1).

"For God is my witness, ... , that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Rom 1:9).

"Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth" (2Cor. 1:23).

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,... knoweth that I lie not" (2Cor. 11:31).

"Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:20).

It must be evident from examples such as these, that what Jesus would have his disciples avoid is the frivolous misuse of language. He was not forbidding solemn declarations, which are a proper expression of deep emotion. But to follow the example of Paul in present-day circumstances is perhaps unwise, as such language can be seen to be overly emotional in most contexts.

Misinterpreted statements

But there is another aspect of the words of Jesus that is significant. The words of Jesus seem to imply that any serious statement should be doubled for emphasis, or at least emphasized in some way. A simple statement, or idle comment as it were, is not treated with the same seriousness, and perhaps does not imply that it is the considered opinion of the utterer. And this also has significant consequences in our walk towards the Kingdom. How many times has a comment, perhaps not particularly well thought out, been used against a disciple — or even a group of disciples. There have indeed been occasions such as this. Two brethren are having a conversation. A bystander overhears, and claims he has heard one of them make

a statement, and immediately accuses him of some sort of heresy, and refuses to accept any denials made. And the other brother even declares that they must have been misunderstood: no such statement was made. But this too is refused, and the turmoil spreads.

It is somewhat incomprehensible that such situations arise: but they do, and probably will. If we would ignore any statements made without any special emphasis, much trouble would be avoided.

As Paul says:

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col 4:6).

Perhaps we can paraphrase: Let your speech at all times be pleasant, not antagonistic. Let it be seasoned with the salt of wisdom, and let you know how you ought to answer anyone, for the Hope and the Faith that is in you. Let you use words with care, speak plainly and without using circumlocutions or obscure terms. Let your words, if necessary, be emphasized if you want to be able to truly stand behind your words.

Conclusions

Verbal communications, especially when conducted face to face, is the bedrock of human communication. Written words are so often capable of more than one interpretation, and it is human nature, unfortunately, to use the worst possible interpretation in case of doubt. Without the opportunity to ensure you truly understand a declaration, and perhaps restate in your own words, many misunderstandings have arisen and will so continue. There is a need for written communication, but this should be preceded by ensuring there is no way the written words can be understood, perhaps by ensuring those initially in disagreement at least can express what is their understanding.

And words should never be quoted if out of context. As those in America watch examples of all sorts of statements in the current presidential race, we in our community should be repulsed by the very idea of using such techniques as we all too often see and hear. A word misheard is a very dangerous thing, and the person makes the statement should always be given the benefit of any doubt.

On the other hand, a statement made with special emphasis should always be considered a true statement of a person's opinion or belief. There tends to be in many circumstances an opinion expressed that “they do not really believe that.” And there is the other side: if you have any doubts, do not say it with emphasis. Many assurances have been given, only to be later retracted: “I did not really mean that.”

“Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another (Eph 4:25).

Peter Hemingway

Notes:

1. Some of this material is derived from “Studies in the Gospels” by Harry Whittaker.
2. Legally, in the USA “verbal” agreements can in fact be either spoken or written!

Exhortation

My Generic Exhortation: A Different Time and Place

Have any of you ever apologized for giving the same exhortation a second time? My wife tells me this may be the case with “The Generic Exhortation”. If that is so, then my defense is this: One of the main points of this exhortation is that it’s okay — and in fact quite useful sometimes — to repeat themes and ideas, and the Bible passages that support them. So I say: If you can’t repeat an exhortation about repeating exhortations, what exhortation *can* you repeat?

When my brother and I were growing up, back in the last century, we attended Sunday school and meetings in Lampasas, Texas, a small ecclesia not too far from where I now reside. Our attitudes about the Bible and its teachings were shaped considerably by that time and place, and the brothers and sisters who lived there.

It’s sad to say that, while we could visit some quite exotic and extraordinary places today — *if* we had the time and money — there are some places we can no longer visit. The circumstances no longer exist, many of the people have passed on, and we ourselves are different. Thomas Wolfe, the novelist, said, “You can’t go home again.” For nearly all of us grown-ups, that’s very true in the most meaningful way. That “home”, and how it felt when we were young, doesn’t exist anymore, except insofar as we carry it with us in our memories.

Speaking for myself, when I hear the word “patriarch”, or the phrase “our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, my mind shifts back about 50 years and I see the face of “old brother Sammy Wolfe”, and then the faces of others from the same time and place.

In the early days, the ecclesial meeting was a very informal affair; it was mainly family. People sat in a circle and brothers knelt for prayers. Often the patriarch, “old brother Sammy”, presided — calling on the others, often his sons, to do readings and prayers. Sometimes exhortations consisted of each brother in turn making a comment on the daily Bible readings, or else saying, “I have nothing this week.”

My grandmother, Sister Jessie Hatcher, attended the Lampasas meeting. “Grandma” had a great influence upon me, in my formative years. For one thing, she was always determined to attend all Christadelphian meetings. Although she was a Berean Christadelphian, she made a point of attending all Central and Unamended gatherings within driving distance. (After all, she had known many of the brothers and sisters, in the different fellowships, before the divisions had ever happened, and she still considered them all her brothers and sisters.) Later on, when I had a driver’s license, she enlisted me to drive her to all the gatherings; there I met some interesting folks, some of whom I see around me today.

Grandma was a voracious reader, a fierce defender of the faith, and outspoken in all her opinions. I remember as a child, being somewhat embarrassed dur-

ing exhortations, because Grandma would recite aloud, impromptu, along with the speaker, many of the Bible verses as he read or quoted them. And for good measure, she would sometimes toss in a loud “Amen!” to express wholehearted agreement. I still have some of her Christadelphian books, with her name in the front, and her notes in the margins, and various passages boldly underlined. (She never underlined anything *lightly* in her whole life! She always *underlined boldly*! A psychologist could probably make something of that.)

In Lampasas, there were only a couple of sisters who played the piano (including our mother). Their repertoires were limited — so there was a lot of repetition of the same favorite hymns (including “Brethren, let us walk together”). And there was a lot of mixing and matching of hymn tunes to fit more of the available hymns. One of the favorite hymn tunes was “What a friend we have in Jesus”, and this music matched up with various lyrics, including (notably) “Come, thou long-expected Jesus”. Here we still sing those words to the music for “What a friend we have in Jesus”.

Over the years, from the earlier hymnbook to the latest one, the tune for one particular hymn was modified ever so slightly, while the words remained the same. This means that, even today, when that hymn is sung, you can listen closely and hear a few of the old-timers (if they happen to be around) hitting the higher note at a critical point in each stanza. That hymn was the one we sang just before the exhortation (#265), and you may have noticed that too. When I hear someone singing the old, higher, note instead of the new one, I feel a tingling and I’m immediately taken back a half century or so, to that place which is impossible to visit any more.

In Lampasas, there were only six or eight exhorting brothers, aside from an occasional visiting brother. This meant that Wesley and I heard each brother many times over the years, and invariably there was a lot of repetition, of ideas and even of favorite Bible verses. Some of those old standby verses were so well-known that they no longer required any explanation or exposition. Sometimes the exhorting brother just read them or quoted them, and kept on going.

Wesley and I heard some verses so many times that, even though we weren’t always listening, we could still quote them verbatim (from the King James Version, of course). At the time, they seemed almost boring, but the simple fact is: We still remember those verses just as we heard them, perhaps hundreds of times.

There is Bible precedent for this repetition of ideas. In the commandments concerning the Passover, in Exodus where God tells Moses:

*“And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians’... On that day tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the LORD did for **me** when I came out of Egypt.’ In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean? say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought **us** out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery’ “ (Exod 12:26,27; 13:8,14).*

What a wonderful picture: “I do this because of what the LORD did for *me* when I came out of Egypt.” Even if it was 10 generations earlier, or 100 generations, the Jewish father was to tell his son how the LORD brought *him*, and “*us*”, out of Egypt! It was a miracle of redemption to be repeated and experienced anew with each successive generation. Each Jew — no matter when or where he lived — was to think of *himself* as having been delivered out of slavery into freedom.

That’s the picture we get from these verses. Repeating Bible lessons makes fathers and mothers, and grandparents, and uncles and aunts, into “patriarchs” — like “old brother Sammy” — reminding us of what Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Paul can tell us, from the pages of the Bible, about the gospel and our hope. It may be repetitious, but when we truly believe, it can never really be boring or tiresome. It is our life!

So Wesley and I developed our own list of “favorite” Bible verses, “favorites” because we heard them so often that, even today, we can scarcely forget them, and “favorites” because they simply reminded us of key points of that faith we learned as we grew up, and hold to this very day. And because they were “favorites”, there was almost never a Sunday morning that we didn’t hear one or two of them — and some mornings we seemed to hear them all, maybe more than once!

All-star Bible verses

So, here is our “generic exhortation”, made up of five samples, “generic Bible verses”. Call it the Lampasas lineup of all-star Bible verses.

- 1) *Romans 15:4: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*

The NIV translates “patience and comfort” as “endurance and encouragement”. The development of patience (or endurance) in the day-to-day living of our lives is what an exhortation is all about, and the only true exhortations come from the examples and teachings of Scriptures. We don’t read the Bible just to learn facts; we especially read the Bible to be comforted with our hope, and to be encouraged to shun bad examples and to follow good ones. And for this purpose, the Old Testament is equally useful as the New Testament.

For me, this verse points out how abundantly meaningful and helpful is all the Bible. It is not just old history; it is not just about events that happened thousands of years ago. It is as alive as today’s news, and tomorrow’s expectations. The Word of God is living and powerful, but *only* if we see it as such, and spend time reading and thinking about it.

- 2) *Galatians 3:16, 27-29: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ... For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Like the first generic exhortation verse, this also looks back to the beginning,

and the gospel preached to Abraham. It reminds us of some fundamental Bible principles:

- that Jesus Christ was and is the “seed” or descendant of Abraham,
 - that the promises to our spiritual father Abraham were also promised to his special seed Christ himself, and
 - that those same promises are also given to us, *if we are baptized “into Christ”*.
- 3) *1 Corinthians 13:13: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*

“Charity” (KJV) is, we all know, “love”, or “agape”, the love that is modeled after the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb who laid down his life for us. But *why* is “love” the greatest of these?

I think it is because of this:

- “Faith” looks back, to the past (it is about what God has *already* done, in and through Christ).
- “Hope” looks forward, to the future (it is about what God *will* do through Christ).
- But “love” is for *right now*, and that’s why it’s so important.

Past love no longer matters. Promises of future love are essentially useless until we act upon them. Love is an action, not an emotion. We need to *show* love (not just *feel* love) each day. Love is practical. It shows itself (or *should* show itself) in all the simple virtues: patience, kindness, care for those who are sick, protection of those who are weak. It avoids all mean-spirited things like boasting, pride and anger. It encourages good in others, while overlooking (and forgiving) their faults.

Showing love doesn’t require great intellectual attainments, or great wealth, or great physical strength. It does not need to be extravagant; it simply means doing the best with what we have, where we are — but it means doing it every day, for those who are near us. Giving a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty. A helping hand, just for a moment, to someone who is struggling. A word of comfort to someone who is troubled.

We can’t *be* Jesus Christ, but then we don’t *need* to be him. We just need to *try* to be *like* him. To be the best George, or the best Jim, or the best Joe. To be the best Marti, or the best Inga, or the best Sarah... In short, to be the best “whoever” we can manage to be, *right now*.

But we do need to be the best we can be... *right now* — not next week, or next year, not “when I get a job”, or “when I graduate”, or “when I retire” — but the best we can be, *right now*. We need to show love today.

- 4) *Luke 12:32: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

Do we remember that it is a *command* to “fear not”? What are we afraid of? Are we afraid *because* we are nothing but a “little flock”? Are we afraid of sickness, or financial loss, or hunger, or death? Are we afraid that we will miss out on something in this life that we ought to have?

This verse tells us that our heavenly Father finds pleasure in giving us the greatest gift imaginable — the Kingdom of God! He *wants* to give us eternal life in His family, in a wonderful regenerated world. More than anything else, He wants to *save* us. Even when we have troubles in this life (which the Bible tells us are inevitable), we must remember that they are nothing but light and momentary afflictions. Sooner than we think, all our troubles will disappear in a full and eternal joy when His Son returns.

5) *Matthew 25:34: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*

When the king returns, he will say to those on his right hand (the hand of acceptance and honor): “Come!” It will be the most wonderful invitation. The world has never received an invitation like it, in all its history.

We have a glorious heritage, and a glorious inheritance. The Almighty Father has prepared a place for His children, and He is holding the door open to welcome us. If we truly believe this, then anything and everything else in this whole crazy world is beside the point. Everything else is like the morning mist before the sun rises. Everything else is no more than the paper in which our special gift is wrapped, waiting for the right moment to be opened.

“Come, ye blessed of my Father... inherit the Kingdom!”

The bread and wine

As we prepare to take the bread and the wine, some of us can let our minds wander back, 50 years or more, remember faces and names, and think of the power of tradition, of repeated actions and thoughts.

‘We do this, because of what the LORD God did for our fathers, and for us, in Egypt, and in the wilderness — and what the Lord Jesus Christ did for our fathers, and for us, in the Upper Room, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and at Golgotha.’

Others may think of today’s generic exhortation, with its all-time-favorite Bible verses:

- Everything that was written before is for our learning, so it’s important to read the Bible.
- The promises to Abraham are just as real today as when he first heard them. Those promises have been given to us all, regardless of race, age or gender.
- Having such a wonderful hope, and sustained by our faith in what God has said, we must show our love for Him, His Son, and one another. We do this in simple acts of kindness and care, toward those who are around us.
- We do not need to fear anything that may happen to us in this life, because God will delight in giving us all things.

When His Son returns, our Father will welcome us into His wonderful Kingdom, promised and prepared especially for us from the beginning of time.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

First Principles

Fellowship Practice According to the Scriptures (2)

We continue our survey of the Biblical principles of fellowship. Following the pattern found in several New Testament letters, last month's article focused on the doctrinal basis for our fellowship practice and this month we turn to the powerful exhortations that follow from these principles.

Our Christadelphian fellowship is truly different from that which is common in most other communities. There is a strong sense of family, a closeness that most of us have experienced, especially when we travel amongst our brethren. We welcome them into our hearts and homes no matter where they come from, and we have visited in their homes in all parts of the world, language and cultural differences notwithstanding. There is a shared feeling that we are all working together in our Father's vineyard. Whether it is the work involved in performing our ecclesial activities, or the more personal efforts directed at ourselves as we seek to mold our characters into our Lord's example, we are all fellowshiping in these tasks. God's work is our common calling.

VI. One hope of your calling

We recall Paul's exhortation, "I... beseech you that **you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called...** even as **you are called in one hope of your calling**" (Eph 4:1, 4). Being a child in God's family has serious implications for us and our spiritual careers, the vocations to which we have been called.

In the Bible, trade guilds use familial language to describe their leaders and members:

- Guilds are called "families": "**the families** of the house of them that wrought fine linen" (1Chr 4:21).
- The founder of a guild, its current head, and its master craftsmen are each called "father": "Jubal: he was **the father** [i.e., founder of the guild] of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Gen 4:21); "Joab, **the father** [i.e., head] of the valley of Charashim <02798: craftsmen>; for they were craftsmen <02791 cheresh>" (1Chr 4:14); and "Now I have sent a skillful man, endowed with understanding, Hiram **my master craftsman** [literally, **father**]... skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple and blue, fine linen and crimson, and to make any engraving and to accomplish any plan which may be given to him" (2Chr 2:13, 14 NKJV; cf. Tanakh), that is, the King of Tyre sent no mere journeyman to work on Solomon's temple, but a highly skilled master, perhaps even the head of the profession (compare Bezaleel and Aholiab, Exod 31:1-6; 35:30-35).
- The members or apprentices of the guild are called "sons": "Next unto him repaired Uzziel **the son** of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah **the son** [i.e., apprentice] of one of the apothecaries... After

him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's **son** [i.e., apprentice]" (Neh 3:8, 31).

- The same familial terminology is used of a school of prophets (1Sam 10:1, 5-13; 1Kgs 13:11-15, 20:35; 2Kgs 2:3-7, 12, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:12; Amos 7:14).
- The Bible has other examples of such family professions: Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), the son of a carpenter (Matt 13:55); James and John the sons of Zebedee followed their father's craft of fishing (Mark 1:19-20).
- "Apprenticeship was in fact analogous to adoption: the verb *ekdidosthai* is used for both."¹ To join a guild was to become an "adopted son" of its "father".

Even today, trade unions and guilds are often referred to as brotherhoods; for example, International Brotherhood of Steelworkers, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (i.e., Truck Drivers), and Brotherhood of Police Officers. The Mathematics Genealogy Project is documenting the "family tree" for those who have doctorate degrees in mathematics: advisors are parents and their students are children in the tree.

In a natural family, the Jewish father is expected to teach his son, especially the Torah and the history of God's salvation of Israel (e.g., Exod 12:26-27; 13:8-10; Deut 4:5, 9-10; 6:1, 7, 20-25; 11:19; 32:7, 46; Psalms 78:1-8; Prov 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1). The same is true in a trade guild: the "father", a master craftsman, trains his "sons", the apprentices and journeymen learning the craft. Jesus alludes to this growth of a master's disciples, "*The **disciple** is not above his **master**: but every one that is perfect shall be as his **master***" (Luke 6:40). Moreover, this emphasis on training is also true of God's family guild: "***All thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children***" (Isa 54:13).

Jesus was the Son of God, so Jesus was his Father's apprentice:

*"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel***" (John 5:19-20).

*"Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: **but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.** They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that **I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.** And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for **I do always those things that please him.** As he spake these words, many believed on him" (John 8:25-30).*

Jesus was God's apprentice: the Son could do nothing of himself, but what he saw the Father do; he was taught by his Father everything that he needed to know in order to finish the works that had been assigned to him. These works were the works of the One who sent him:

“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17).

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:1-4).

Jesus finished these works that God had assigned him to do, and by doing so he turned in his masterpiece and so became the master craftsman in God's family guild:

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4).

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:28-30; cf. Gen 2:1-3; Exod 39:32; 40:33; Psalms 22:31).

In like manner, we have been called to be part of God's family guild: we are sons of God, taught by God to do His work:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

“Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:43-47).

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1Thess 4:9).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Tim 3:16-17).

Our Statement of Faith, valuable as it is, must be understood to be more than a set of propositions to be affirmed or denied. God's Word instructs us in His ways. We

are called to be His children, following His commandments. Repeatedly the Bible tells us that God's teachings must be believed, and that beyond mere acknowledgment, they must be lived.

Paul uses familial language to describe his relationship to his disciples. He writes to the Corinthians, "I write not these things to shame you, but **as my beloved sons** I warn you. For **though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.** Wherefore I beseech you, **be ye followers of me**" (1Cor 4:14-16), and to the Thesalonians, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1Thess 2:11-12). He calls: Timothy "**my beloved son**" (1Cor 4:17), "**my own son in the faith**" (1Tim 1:2), "**my dearly beloved son**" (2Tim 1:2), and "**my son**" (2Tim 2:1); Titus "**mine own son after the common faith**" (Titus 1:4); and Onesimus "**my son**" (Philemon 10). Peter calls Marcus "**my son**" (1Pet 5:13). Similarly, in the Kingdom Age, Christ shall be called "**the everlasting Father**" (Isa 9:6), "**a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah**" (Isa 22:21), "**Behold I and the children which God hath given me**" (Heb 2:13; cf. Isa 8:18).

Being in God's family guild means that we need to be doing God's work, the good works we have been created for:

- "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16)
- "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every **good work**" (2Cor 9:8).
- "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).
- "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col 1:9-11).
- "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of **good works**" (Titus 2:13-14).
- "Now the God of peace... Make you perfect in every **good work** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:20, 21).

Jesus gives a simple definition of his true family: "**My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it**" (Luke 8:21). In short, being in God's family means being in God's family guild, hearing His word, and doing it. This is the true meaning of fellowship, of being true Christadelphians.

There is one hope of our calling, our vocation. Being in the family of God means being in His family guild. We are instructed by God's inspired Word, which prepares us to do His good works, unto which we have been created. We are to walk worthy of our vocation, worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work. To be true brothers and sisters of Christ, we must hear the word of God and do it.

VII. One spirit

We recall Paul's exhortation:

"I... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is... one Spirit" (Eph 4:1-4).

Transforming our minds so that we think and act like Christ is the key to effective fellowship. Like the Word made flesh, we must reflect the Word of God in our lives. This is the essence of the fruit of the Spirit:

*"This I say then, **Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

Now the works of the flesh are manifest... of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

*But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [faithfulness, fidelity], meekness, temperance [self-control]: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal 5:22-26; cf. Rom 8).*

The fruit of the Spirit are the watchwords of fellowship: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness/fidelity, meekness, and self-control.

We are to be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, not thinking more highly of ourselves than appropriate, counting others better than ourselves:

*"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, **that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ.**" (Phil 2:1-5).*

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom 12:3).

We are to take on the mind of Christ, becoming last of all, servant of all, submitting to one another:

- *“Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it... If a man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” (Mark 8:34b-35; 9:35).*
- *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21).*
- *“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (1Pet 3:8-9).*

In our society, accepting that we must submit to others is extremely difficult. The culture we live in tells us that we must stand up for ourselves, we must demand our rights, that submitting is for fools and the weak. In addition, there are many misconceptions about self-denial. In contrast, the Scriptures are clear: submission is the key to true self-fulfillment.

The repetition of these ideas—loving others, foregoing our rights, seeking the benefit of others, following the example of Christ — emphasizes their importance:

- Love thy neighbor (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:7-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8; Matt 5:43-44).
- Love one another as Jesus has loved us, by which we shall be known as his disciples (John 13:34-35).
- Love without hypocrisy (Rom 12:9-18 NKJV).
- All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matt 7:12).
- Forego our “rights” to promote the progress of the gospel (1Cor 9:1-12; 2Thess 3:7-9).
- Become servants to all, for the gospel’s sake (1Cor 9:19-23).
- Seek the benefit of others, please all men (1Cor 10:23-24, 31-33).
- Live not unto ourselves, but unto Christ (1Cor 5:14-15; Gal 2:20).
- Constrained by the love of Christ (2Cor 5:14).
- Please not ourselves, receive one another (Rom 15:1-9).
- Follow the example of Christ (Mark 10:42-45; John 13:3-5, 12-17; Eph 5:1-2; Phil 2:5; 1Pet 2:21).

This collection of exhortations indicate that the new commandment, to love one another, and the golden rule, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, are the essence of true fellowship.

Reflecting these spiritual characteristics is the key to peace:

- “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, **live peaceably with all men**” (Rom 12:18).
- “**Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another**” (Rom 14:19).
- “And let **the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful**” (Col 3:15).
- “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; **let him seek peace, and ensue it**. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1Pet 3:10-12).

There is one spirit, one mind of Christ, and we must endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The fruit of the spirit — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control — are the watchwords of true fellowship. We are to share the mind of Christ, becoming servants to one another, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following him. We are to love one another, treating each other the way we want to be treated. We are to seek peace, building each other up, thinking better of others. These behaviors are the keys to harmony in our community, and to us being approved at the return of our Lord.

Key ideas

Understanding and obeying fellowship principles according to the Scriptures is essential for our community today. These principles can be summarized as follows:

- Fellowship is a collection of covenant relationships, of mutual interactions with our heavenly Father, His son, and our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Fellowship is based on a common set of agreed Scriptural first principles.
- Fellowship is an ecclesia’s responsibility to implement for its members.
- Fellowship excludes those who do not share the same Scriptural first principles.
- Fellowship excludes those who do not walk after the commandments of Christ.
- Fellowship between ecclesias is a corporate responsibility that requires recognizing all ecclesias that follow the same doctrines and practices, and necessarily excludes those that do not.

May the God of peace bless us, and keep us; may His face shine upon us; may He be gracious unto us. May the LORD lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace. Amen.

The Tidings Publishing Committee

Notes:

1. C. H. Dodd, “A Hidden Parable in the Fourth Gospel,” chapter 3 of *More New Testament Studies*, p. 33.

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Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone.**

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel (11) Underestimating Our Creator

We can review ancient and modern records testifying how the scientific elite down through the millennia have been deeply puzzled by the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in defining the features of nature. The validity and consistency of the mathematical patterns, binding these features of creation, have resulted in mathematical prophesies concerning sub-atomic structures that have ultimately been vindicated. The most emotionally unsettling component of these repetitive mathematical patterns is perhaps the way they drive to the conclusion that there is an intelligent designer. This conclusion is fought with every emotional ounce by both the mathematically inclined as well as the mathematically challenged, because of their naturally self-worshipping perspective. This supposedly 'unreasonable' effectiveness has generated the continuing question as to whether mathematics was invented or discovered. This continuing quandary for the unexpected effectiveness of mathematics in displaying the patterns and inter-related and inter-dependent nature of our universe is the premise for the most recent book by a senior astrophysicist associated with the Hubble space project. Dr. Mario Livio is the author of *Is God A Mathematician?*

The perspective differential

We have determined that the foundational motivation for the intentional complexity of all divine communications, is to empower the meek, circumcised as it were in their heart, to progress into increasingly greater levels of divine enlightenment, while preventing the self-obsessed from escaping their blissful ignorance. The expressions and parables of Yahweh and His son were carefully designed to give to those who had, and take away from those who had not. The crucifying of our ego (heart) facilitates an entirely new perspective for both the written word of God (Bible) and the spoken word of God (creation). Underestimating our Creator and overestimating ourselves is the universal paradigm for the societies of the children of men (as opposed to the community of the children of God). This differential in perspective is quite evident in these musings of the mathematical elite, as referenced in Dr. Livio's book. (He is a Jewish scientist from Israel.)

The universal underestimation of our creator

Sir Isaac Newton was perhaps the greatest of history's mathematicians. He was also a Bible student and believer in the intelligent design of creation (as opposed to 'nature' accidentally progressing from simple chaos to an ordered, yet interdependent complexity). However, Newton could not scientifically explain the stability of our solar system. He suggested that the reason the planets do not spiral into the sun or slingshot into deep space was the power of the Creator who miraculously (and unnaturally) maintained the balance of the solar system. Newton's reasoning

suggested that because the Creator's works of creation were not perfectly balanced, this somehow proved His existence. Despite Newton's faith in a Creator, his underestimation of that Creator somehow confirmed his confidence in the existence of a (somewhat) intelligent designer. A little over a hundred years later the Marquis de Laplace published his research entitled *Celestial Mechanics*. This work answered the questions about the stability of our solar system, without requiring magical tweaking by an almost omniscient and almost omnipotent creator. Laplace most certainly did not believe in an Intelligent Designer. His Perturbation Theory demonstrated how the stability of our solar system would extend for far longer than that anticipated by Newton. Laplace maintained that since nature was perfectly balanced, needing no magical interference, this somehow validated the absence of an intelligent designer.

Isn't that fascinating?! Both elite scientists employ their disrespectful impressions of a less than omniscient and omnipotent Creator to validate their diametrically opposed reasoning. Newton promotes the concept that because the Creator couldn't get it quite right and had to tweak the features of creation for sustainability, this somehow proves intelligent design and control. LaPlace promotes the concept that since the sustainability of the universe is perfectly right (that the Creator did a flawless job), that this somehow proves there is no need for man to 'create' some power higher than ourselves. Both men based their conclusions on the premise that our Creator cannot be as all-powerful and all-knowing as He claims. This Creator-degrading presumption is extremely common. The Creator is not some mere manipulator of a universe greater than Himself. Literally everything that has been made projects the divine truths and principles of our Creator, right down to the finest sub-atomic detail. The disciplines of mathematics, chemistry and biology all offer the same patterns as Scriptural expressions. The glory of the knowledge of our Creator is far more amazing than we can possibly understand with such limited mental capacities as we currently possess.

The enlightenment barrier

This line of reasoning begs the question: If we human beings can discover such incredibly complex scientific truths that have been the springboards for incredible lifestyle advances, why is it so impossible for mankind to see the supposedly far simpler relationship between spiritual truths and creational features? (We think of examples in medicine, travel, energy, communication and mechanization.) The answer is academically simple but very difficult to emotionally accept. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*" (Jer 17:9). The human heart is the barrier to eternal spiritual truths, but not scientific truths.

Listen to our hearts ... and we will always be wrong

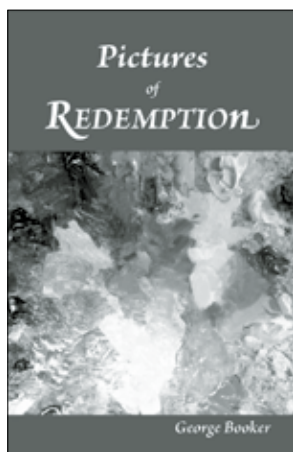
The sad truth is that society's shared foundational presumptions are entirely based on a shared set of heart generated presumptions. Political, religious, humanist and entertainment leaders all parrot the same mantra of listening to our hearts so that we will never go wrong. This is the great lie of this, our final Ecclesial Age generation. The serpent philosophy, preferred by our original ancestors over divine righteousness, is naturally generated from an uncircumcised heart. Our instinc-

tive thought process is naturally self-validating. Enlightenment doesn't reverse that reality. It simply highlights the real danger of listening to an uncircumcised heart, untrained in the eternal divine truths and principles. This is why apostasy is a constant and ever-present threat within the community of believers. This is why literally every form of false doctrine is always both God degrading and flesh exalting. Jesus addressed this issue with the Sadducees when he proved the doctrine of the resurrection by simply reminding the Sadducees how his Father defined Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Luke 20:37-38). If there was no resurrection, this would simply have identified God as nothing but a god of the dead, like the Greek Hades, the Roman Pluto, the Egyptian Anubis or the Indian Kali. Rejecting the doctrine of the resurrection is absolutely blasphemous, as is the same case with all heart distorted doctrines. Perhaps this stinging embarrassment is why none of Jesus' opponents were willing to risk the humiliation of asking him any further 'trick' questions after this response (Luke 20:40).

Our final Creation's Gospel commentary will touch on the microscopic validation of divine truths and principles offered by *the things that have been made* (Rom 1:20).

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

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The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Get Them Thinking and Talking! The Use of Question Sheets

More often than not, teachers do the talking and students do the listening. But talking is not always teaching and listening is not always learning. There are alternatives to the talking-listening model of education. A lively question-discussion session, for example, can help both teaching and learning take place.

Questions draw responses; and well-designed questions can engage minds, draw useful responses, and promote discussion.¹ Herein lies a lesson planning strategy that can make Sunday school classes more interactive and educational.²

Using question sheets

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate the point is to share an experience. Some time ago I was asked to fill in as a substitute for our senior Sunday school class. The students – all teenage boys — were studying the commandments of Christ, and I was given free rein with the subject. I needed a quick lesson plan!

I decided to focus on matters of conscience, especially in relation to the way we deal with violence in the world. The entire lesson was developed around a single problem:

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home, pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*³

If you pose this as a one-off question, you might get a few quick responses from your students and then have things lapse into unproductive silence. It is not an easy question for a young person to answer on the spot. I wanted to make sure that this didn't happen. I wanted the kids to think about human nature and the way people often react in situations like this; I wanted them to think about the Biblical principles involved, and, as much as anything, I wanted them to have a little time to think before they spoke.

We used three question sheets that expanded on the problem and allowed us to accomplish all of these things. The question sheet strategy worked very well.

First question sheet: What would you do?

The students were each given a copy of the first question sheet as soon as they walked into class. We read the problem together and then they went to work. They were given three or four minutes of quiet time during which they were asked to ponder the problem and choose how they might respond. Here is what the first question sheet looked like:

What would you do?

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home,
pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*

Circle one or more choices.

- A — Tell the man that he has no business doing this and if he doesn't get out you will call the police.
- B — Try to bluff the intruder into thinking that you have already called the police.
- C — Grab a gun and try to kill him first.
- D — Try to knock the gun out of his hand.
- E — Turn your pit bull loose on him.
- F — Jump in front of your mother to protect her.
- G — Slip into another room and contact the police.
- H — Other. Please specify your own choice of action.

(writing space)

After think time was up, rather than make the students commit to any of these courses of action, I asked them to evaluate each of the options, one at a time. What did they think about each choice? Was it likely to work or not? What might be the probable outcome? Would the outcome be what they wanted? Could they think of any alternatives?

The students basically critiqued themselves as the discussion went along. It was interesting to see what they were thinking; and it definitely was not time for me to jump in and tell them “all the answers!”

Second and third question sheets: The issues involved

When this discussion had run its course, a second question sheet was handed out and we started to think more specifically about the Biblical issues involved in the problem. Again a few minutes of think time were given for the students to formulate answers to the questions before I opened it up for discussion. Here is what the second question sheet looked like.

Issues involved

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home,
pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*

Assume that you and your mother are Christadelphians.

- 1 — If you react with violence, what are the possible outcomes?
- 2 — If you react with nonviolence, what are the possible outcomes?
- 3 — What would the consequences be if you succeeded in killing the intruder?
- 4 — What would the consequences be if you tried to kill the intruder and failed?
- 5 — What would the consequences be if the intruder killed your mother?
Killed you? Killed both of you?

Ample writing space was provided after each question.

These questions further probed the nature of the students' thinking. Did they see the practical value of Christ's nonviolent teaching? Did they have a conscience about inflicting harm on someone else? Were they prepared to accept the consequences of their actions? Did they have enough faith to act in a Christ-like manner, even if it failed?

It still wasn't time for me to tell the students what to do. The point of these questions was to let them work things out for themselves while I listened to see just how Biblically they were thinking. Could they begin to identify the Biblical issues at stake?

The last question sheet followed up on this one and was handled the same way. Here especially we began turning up Bible passages to get God's guidance on the problem. At this point, too, the students were encouraged to evaluate the wisdom of their choices in light of God's wisdom. Were the choices they made the same thing that Christ would have done?

Issues involved

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home,
pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*

6 — Which of the choices on the first sheet require you to take matters into your own hands in an attempt to save your mother and yourself?

A B C D E F G H

7 — Which of the choices on the first sheet require you to trust God more than yourself?

A B C D E F G H

8 — How could you put faith in God and put Biblical principles into practice in this situation?

9 — What do you think Christ would do in this situation and why?

10 — What relationship must a Christadelphian have toward his enemy?

(Writing space provided for questions 8-10)

With these three question sheets, we were not at a loss for things to do and talk about. A full and vigorous Sunday school session was the result. But there was still something I wanted to get across to my students. They needed to know that God's way really works and is not just theoretical. For this we needed more time and more things to think about.⁴

A footnote on the preparation of question sheets

Framing good questions doesn't just happen. It takes work. I suggest that you do two things when you develop a question sheet.

- 1) Set it aside for a few days after you have finished it and then come back to it. Do the questions still make sense to you? Do you remember why you asked

each question? And are you really asking what you want to ask?

- 2) Give your question sheet to someone else to read. Do they understand the questions and interpret them the same way you do? Do they see the point of the questions or do you need to tweak some of them in order to clarify things?

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Notes:

1. See “The Questions We Ask,” *The Tidings*, June, 2012, pp.228-231; July, 2012, pp.281-285.
2. This strategy also works for CYC, the midweek Bible class, and other educational forums.
3. Not long ago, one of our Christadelphian young people in New England was asked this question by a military recruiter after he told the recruiter that he was a religious conscientious objector. It takes some careful forethought to answer this question well.
4. See next month’s article: “God’s Way Works! The Use of Case Studies”.

Does turning the other cheek mean that you shouldn’t protect your family?

Jesus says..

“But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mat 5:39).

Taken at face value, this says that if someone wants to hurt you, you should not resist. (See also John 18:36, Rom 12:19-21, 1Thess 5:15, 2Tim 2:24.) Instead you should have faith in God to keep us safe. Here’s an example from Paul:

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2Tim 4:18).

But this leaves open the difficult question of what to do, as a husband and father, about self-defense of defending your family from someone who might try to rape, murder, or otherwise harm them. How would a New Testament believer handle this issue?

Unfortunately, the New Testament doesn’t answer this. We have the principle defined above, set against with natural urge to defend our family (sometimes it’s a marriage vow too). It’s not clear how to resolve this. A clue comes from the general context of Jesus’ remarks in Matt 5:21-45:

- Forget about murder, don’t even be angry with someone
- Cut your eye out rather than look at a woman with lustful intent
- Don’t swear at all — simply tell the truth
- Don’t resist evil — pray for evildoers who hurt you
- And finally: *“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48).*

Jesus is describing a radically different kind of behavior — completely at odds with our instinctive behavior, with behavior that comes naturally. And it’s a standard that no one can meet either. According to this standard, we shouldn’t protect our family. Perfection: it’s something to strive for, every day.

<http://bibleq.info/answer/3999/> Answer by Graham Grieve

Youth Speaks

Introduction

This next series is a group of four articles that are about four major issues that young people face in their lives — baptism, character development, relationships, and debt. It is hoped that as you read through them, even if you have already made the decision to be baptized or if you are no longer looking for a relationship, they will cause you to think upon Biblical things, and to meditate upon practical advice found in the Word of God. Each of us, regardless of our age, are confronted with these four things constantly throughout our lives — if it isn't our own issues that we are facing, at times we are trying to help others with theirs. May these articles serve to help us look at each of these situations with a right attitude and with a Biblical foundation. May you find them to be practical, Scriptural, and encouraging.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Section editor

Major Decision #1 — Baptism

As human beings we have been hard-wired from creation to have numerous thoughts, feelings, and emotions, but two are chief among them all in every single person on earth:

- 1) A fear of dying
- 2) The need to worship something

Not surprisingly these two are often seen linked together, that is to say often what we worship comforts us as we perhaps fear dying, or at least gives us feelings of eternal youth. Money, self, friends, a boyfriend or girlfriend, games, sports, intelligence, even Bible knowledge apart from a Godly lifestyle, all of these can be the hub of our lives. Sadly no sooner do these things that we worship bring us happiness, than do they become old news and then disappear. By default we usually end up being deceived into worshipping ourselves in one variation or another. However, if you could consciously pick one thing to dedicate your life to what would it be?

In the parable of the “*unprofitable servants*” in Luke 17:7-10, Jesus in his own way told us what we should be doing with our lives, and the attitude we should have while we are doing it. However, there is an amazing unspoken blessing to Jesus’ proposition here, but one had to be paying attention to his previous lessons to grasp them.

The word “you” in the parable reveals that there are two scenarios. First “*which of you having a servant...*” that is to say; imagine you are the master; however in verse 10 Jesus reverses the second scenario saying “*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants’*”: that is to say; in reality you are the servants! Jesus plainly told us that based on how we would expect a hired hand to act for us, we should do whatever he commands us to do, and not expect a reward for it. Sort of like how the government commands

everyone to pay taxes, and does not mail out thank-you cards to those who have done as they were told. However, Jesus is in fact contrasting “you” as a human master and himself as loving master appointed by God! Consider these three differences between how “you” or any other human would treat a servant, and how Jesus in fact treats us:

- 1) We would tend to allow our servants to go hungry before we do; Jesus went hungry 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness because he was unwilling to perform a self-serving miracle (Matt 4:1-4), but he performed one to feed over 5000 fickle followers who had gone hungry no more than one day (John 6:1-15).
- 2) We would not give our servants a choice whether or not to follow our command; Jesus gives us commands, but we are free to choose not to follow them (Matt 16:24 — note the “IF” before the command).
- 3) We would not praise our servants for doing their duty, let alone reward them beyond what they earned; Jesus is offering us the prospect of being rewarded with eternal life despite us being sinners even when we try to follow him (Rom 6:23, Luke 12:32).

If I had to pick one thing to dedicate my life to, it would be to serving a master like this! All other worldly masters dispose of servants when they become unprofitable — this master actually laid down his life for his servants. Who won the gold medal for the 100m dash in the 1992 Olympics? Who was named “the most beautiful person” by People Magazine in 1992? Who was the world’s first billionaire? Surely anyone of these three achievements would have taken a lifetime of dedication. Sadly the people who the world once idolized are soon forgotten, as a master that moves on to the next servant when the last one has grown too weak to be profitable. Truly even the best positions the world has to offer cannot compare with the honor and pleasure of being a servant in Christ.

Baptism is when we accept the invitation to follow Christ, and by implication forsake all other things that previously controlled our lives. There is a sense of honor in no longer avoiding our duty to totally submit our lives to God. It is also humbling to confess that we are unprofitable servants because we can only give back a life to God that he has given us in the first place; but most of all it is a sense of thankfulness for salvation. We have the work-ethic and attitude of a servant, but with the complete joy that our master is like no other master in this world. Where else can a person go to find a master who would lay down his own life for you, pay you an infinite sum for a mere 70ish years of labor, forgive you when fall short of his commands daily, listen to you any time you need to talk, offer you good advice to live by if you want to spare yourself pain and heartache, and guide you to an ecclesia to keep you company?

Whether or not people are aware of it, we are all looking for a master to dedicate our lives to, but most are far more exacting and much less loving than Jesus, and his Father who sent him.

Joey Marple (North Battleford, SK)

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (10) Guideline Number 9: Immorality

The word “immorality” does not appear in the original King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Some have deplored this omission and the use instead of archaic terms, such as fornication¹, which is not readily understood in the modern context. The English Standard Version (ESV) corrects this difficulty by using the word “immorality” forty-one times to describe behavior that is specifically repugnant to the Lord God. The Apostle Paul tells us:

“For this is the will of God,...abstain from sexual immorality;” (1Thess. 4:3 ESV²)

The sexual revolution

The sexual revolution that took part in the latter part of the 20th Century, fostered by the invention of the birth control pill, and the ready availability of legal abortion, are elements that made promiscuous sexual relationships more commonly accepted in society. The endless reports of sexual immorality in society, as a whole, was exemplified by the general acceptance of the multiple marriages, or live-in relationships, of public figures ranging from entertainment personalities and sports figures to political leaders. One infamous basketball star even boasted of having known intimately 20,000 women, and this didn't seem to incite any serious public approbation. The specter of sexually transmitted diseases, especially the possibility of contracting AIDS, slowed this immoral march for a time, but at least in the western industrialized nations the progress of medical treatments has largely alleviated these dangers. So, to a great extent, the explosive pace of immorality has resumed with vengeance in the 21st century. With many universities having moved to co-ed dormitories and the general blind eye college administrators seem to have towards sexual immorality — their attitude appears to be one of having much bigger issues to worry about, such as whether or not the school has a winning football team! For those of us born in the dark ages when men and woman lived in separate buildings on campus, where members of the opposite sex were not allowed anywhere except the lounge areas of the opposites dormitory and where housemothers zealously protected the virtue of the female students under their care — the current climate on campus is a total, unabashed shock. Even more troubling is that the sexual revolution has spread to high school where a recent extensive survey determined that 40% of young woman in America ages 15 through 19 have had intimate sexual relationships.³ Now is this a serious problem, or is it not?

From my observations on a college campus, I have found that most parents seem resigned to the sexually immoral climate these days, and simply hope that their child takes proper precautions so as not to cause a pregnancy. (Some minority of

parents may even give their children more explicit advice to protect themselves, but this still implies that they are implicitly accepting the sexual climate as a fact without condemning its promiscuous immorality.) I have heard some young people in our community say to me: Just what sort of behavior does God consider as being sexually immoral? After all we have politicians seeking Presidential nominations that have had multiple marriages and still claimed to be running on a platform of “Christian values”. I have also heard it said that promiscuity is a not considered a crime, and if the act is between two consenting adults, why should it be anyone’s business what they do in the privacy of their relationship. Of course, in saying this the “anyone” who is being left out of this equation is the Lord God! The notion that sexually immoral behavior is first and foremost a sin against God is not appreciated in modern society, but it certainly should be amongst us regardless of our age. That this is the case can be illustrated by the behavior of Joseph when Potiphar’s wife was attempting to seduce him. This seduction was intense, we are told: “...*she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her*”. Joseph’s spiritual character is wonderfully revealed in his refusal to give in to temptation when he said: “*How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?*” (Gen 39:9-10). It might be well for all of us to keep these words of Joseph in our hearts and minds if we are ever placed in a situation where peer pressure or simple lack of moral constraint might tempt us to do otherwise.

For a young person to indulge in immorality with the moral climate so prevalent today places them in jeopardy of not being able to eventually have a happy marriage. The apostle Paul was keenly aware of this danger especially since the moral climate of the prevalent pagan culture of the 1st Century A.D. was in many ways parallel to our society today. He exhorted his beloved friend Timothy to:

“... flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

The divorce society

The problem of pervasive immorality permeates all ages not just the teenage and college cohorts. At one university where I worked approximately 50% of the nearly 500 faculty and staff of my particular college were divorced, and among the most prevalent causes leading to the breakdown in the marital relationship was infidelity! While the statistics aren’t this outrageous for Christadelphians, the fact remains that marital infidelity has slowly but surely crept into our community with tragic consequences not only for the individuals involved, but also causing painful collateral damage to family, children and the Ecclesia. What are the implications of today’s loose morality with respect to being capable of having a happy marriage?

The Scriptures leave us no doubt with how the Lord God views sexual immorality:

“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8 , also 22:15).

This is a straightforward, unequivocal statement — if one is sexually immoral then that person will not be in the Kingdom. That makes it a “first principle” though not explicitly stated in our Statement of Faith! We need to appreciate the seriousness of this fact and not accept the modern world’s denial of the crime — in God’s sight sexual immorality is, in effect, a capital offense.

Now it is evident that temptation to infidelity is nothing new and it has caused even the greatest of men to stumble. We read of King David:

“David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful”(2Sam: 11:2).

We all know the story; David’s passion led to sexual immorality with Bathsheba and eventually made him complicit in the murder of Uriah. David paid a terrible price for his infidelity and sadly didn’t even seem to recognize his crime until the Lord God strikingly pointed it out to him via the prophet Nathan. This is one of the most distressing features of sexual immorality — the self-justification and obfuscation that leads a person to do it with almost no awareness of the seriousness of their actions. At the time of occurrence they are instead being caught up in the passion of the moment.

Dissatisfaction in the marital relationship can drive a person, be it the man or the woman to seek, as it were, greener pastures. It is not at all unlikely that one can imagine finding a partner who is prettier, richer, more considerate, and more in harmony with our own dreams and ambitions. Sometimes it is not even a drive, but metaphorically a short-walk! It is the engine that propels the multibillion-dollar pornography business.⁴ This whole new form of virtual infidelity has ruined many a marriage. This industry preys upon human weaknesses and dissatisfactions and the apostle John clearly stigmatized such behavior when he wrote:

*“For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and **the desires of the eyes** and pride in possessions — is not from the Father but is from the world”(1John 2:16).*

We should be able to perceive that the application of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Matthew apply precisely to the modern forms of virtually infidelity epitomized in pornography:

“... ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:27, 28).

Pornography — a modern problem

Pornography has become commonplace, and accepted as a legal expression of free speech in the United States. So it is not surprising that most people in the world generally place no stigma on it as long as it doesn’t involve minors. Nevertheless, we should not confuse the law of God with the law of man! What the Bible is teaching is that high moral standards in marriage relationships include not having imagined infidelity, as well as actual physical unfaithfulness. The reason for this

must be clear in our minds, because such virtual infidelity would exactly parallel our unfaithfulness to God. If we only worshipped the Lord outwardly, but inwardly resented that relationship, our vows to God would be as hollow as our vows to our marriage partner if we harbored lust for others in our hearts.

In times past we were insulated from the pervasiveness of porn by it being difficult to find and access. In previous generations most youths were not really aware of it until well into their adult years.⁵ But today what once was hidden and on the fringes of society is now on every newsstand. It also obtains access into our very homes via the cable or satellite TV and of course the omnipresent Internet. Women also have been known to get caught up in sexual fantasies, but of a slightly different and possibly more benign variety, typified by the multibillion dollar romance novel industry which churns out more than 6,000 volumes a year. The trend unfortunately is to make such romance novels more and more explicit. Some of the top selling books on recent bestseller lists apparently fall into this category judging from reviews in leading newspapers. While still nowhere near as offensive as hard-core porn, this genre still is capable of becoming an addiction that detracts from the marital relationship by creating a fantasy world that a husband would find impossible to emulate.⁶ What to do about it? The Lord Jesus Christ provided us guidance if we are tempted to yield to this situation:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:29).⁷

The Lord here is talking metaphorically, but in the present discussion the analogy is especially apt. As with any addiction it is generally hard for a person to cut off the temptation stone cold without outside help. Most Ecclesias would not have the resources to deal with such a personal issue, and the danger of gossip would surely make almost everyone reluctant to discuss it with most other brethren and sisters. There are community resources available in most places in North America that specialize in dealing with a person's addiction to visual and written immoral sexual fantasies, and they can provide a way to deal with and control these impulses. A search of the Internet yielded several in my hometown that are available locally and several Christadelphian resources are also available on-line that are worth consulting.⁸ Another possible avenue for seeking help would be to have a confidential discussion with one's family doctor as to sources of expertise in this area. Finally, some Ecclesias in North America have a standing relationship with general counseling resources in the community, that either can help directly or would be knowledgeable to make appropriate referrals. I would urge anyone who suspects they have a problem in this area to recognize it immediately and get help sooner rather than later. Don't turn a blind eye to the issue like King David did, because it is unlikely that the Lord will send you a prophet like Nathan to point the finger. More likely it is an issue that we need to face ourselves or have a loved one hurt by our lack of appreciation for the damage it may cause.

Any chance for a happy marriage stands a very good chance of being dashed to pieces if sexual immorality raises its ugly head in the relationship. Unfaithfulness,

virtual or physical, is a serious breach in the bond of trust between a couple that is difficult to reconcile. If the condition is recognized, faced and dealt with via appropriate counseling it is possible for the offending party to control their future actions. The assurance that it will never happen again is a difficult thing to do and moreover may be hard for the injured partner to accept. However, we should never forget that forgiveness is also a “first principle”. It is the only phrase that our Lord Jesus Christ elaborates upon after teaching his disciples how to pray:

“... if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:15).

The Scriptures teach that there is only one sin that is unforgiveable by our Lord and that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28-29). Surely, if the Lord God could forgive King David his sexual immorality, it is possible for us to receive this as a lesson in forgiveness ourselves. I would pray that none of my readers would face such a serious difficulty in their marriages, but if it does happen let the one who has offended repent and find the counseling necessary to permanently cease to cause such offense. Let the offended party find it in their heart to ultimately forgive and try their best to restore the relationship to the state of happiness that the surely they once had when they first fell in love.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Next: How to have happy intimate relationships in a marriage.

Notes:

1. The word fornication appears 40 times in the KJV and not at all in the English Standard Version (ESV). The KJV uses it to describe a plethora of actions including idol worship, adultery, promiscuity, and physical or moral unfaithfulness.
2. All references are from the ESV.
3. From a Center for Disease Control (CDC), report 2010, as cited by the Associated Press June 3, 2010.
4. “As an industry, it has a worldwide value of \$57 billion and a \$12 to \$14 billion value in America. To put this number into context, this industry grosses more money than professional football, baseball and basketball combined in the United States.” Quoted from the *Iowa State Daily*, Ames, Iowa.
5. OK — I’m ancient being 73 years old when this is written! The fact is that growing up to adulthood in the 1950’s the availability and access to porn was so remote that neither myself, nor any of my college peers as nerdy engineering students thought about it. Our biggest concern was trying to understand that new-fangled theory called quantum mechanics. The critical point here is that the incredible explosion in availability today makes the temptation infinitely more difficult to ignore than when I was a youth.
6. It is a fact that men and woman have very different reactions towards visual porn. It also may seem to the readers that my equating “Romance” novel addiction to visual porn as a stretch. However, this is not original with me, but an analogy drawn from numerous discussions with brothers and sisters and from consulting sociological research findings. For more information on this see the article on the website: http://www.netnanny.com/learn_center/article/122
7. In Matthew 5:29 — The ESV and KJV word “hell” is translated from the Greek word “Gehenna” (See the Diaglott), which as most Christadelphians know was the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem where perpetual fires were kindled. Hence, Jesus is telling us to throw out our immorality into the incinerator. A fit image for what to do with pornography!
8. See for example, <http://cycresource.com/> and <http://www.caringnetwork.ca/>

The Book of Mormon:

(1) Problems with Mormon Archaeology

In the January, February and September, 2012, magazines, *Sis. Mary St. Onge* published three articles examining “The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (The Mormons)”. Those articles, combined with the fact that a Mormon, Mitt Romney, is running for president of the United States, prompted us to carefully read the Book of Mormon, which is the primary text we commonly associate with the Mormon religion.

As *Sis. Mary* pointed out, the book primarily follows the migration of the Jew, Lehi, and his family from Jerusalem to a distant land. It also contains a brief summary of the earlier travels of the Jaredites to the same place. This distant land is claimed by Mormons to be the “Americas”. And, as *Sis. Mary* notes, the descendants of Lehi’s family are claimed to be among the native inhabitants of North, South and Central America. It is in following the migration and development of these peoples that we encounter the very significant problem of “Mormon Archaeology”.

Where is this place?

I Nephi is the first division of the Book of Mormon and starts us out in familiar surroundings — Jerusalem, the wilderness and the Red Sea (I Nephi 1:7; 2:5; B.C. 600). Once successfully integrated with another Jewish family group, termed Ishmael and his household, the company is said to begin their travel to the Promised Land. “And we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth.” Eastward from the Red Sea would take them across the Middle East and Asia. They spent eight years in this migration, until “we beheld the sea” (I Nephi 17:1,4,5). Mormons take this to be the Pacific Ocean. After building a boat, said to be at the direction of the Lord, Nephi records, “after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land” (I Nephi 18:23).

When looking at a map, it is obvious to be a Mormon one must believe in the incredible miracle that a people with women and children could migrate from the Red Sea across Asia to the Pacific Ocean in eight years. They would have to traverse vast deserts and dense jungles and work their way through some of the most torturous mountain ranges on earth. They would then need to cross the world’s greatest expanse of ocean. If such a journey took place, one would suspect reference to it would be found in the extensive historical records of Persia (Iran) or China. However, no such records have been found.

Believing the record to be divinely inspired, Mormons attempt to identify the place along the Pacific coast of the Western Hemisphere where the company could have landed and begun the civilization that they feel eventually populated most of the Americas. Of course, Mormons aren’t sure where this was and speculate possible landing sites all the way from Chile to Mexico.

It’s upon reading the details of the place the tribal group supposedly populated that further problems occur. According to Nephi, “we did find upon the land of promise...beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the

ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper” (1 Nephi 18:25).

Where along the Pacific coast in B.C. 589 would fit this detailed description?

One major problem is that horses, cows, and asses don't appear in the Americas for another 2,000 years, when they were imported by the Spaniards and other Europeans. The Book of Ether further complicates the situation by adding “elephants” to the mix (Ether 9:19; this book purportedly records an earlier migration to the promised land by the Jaredites). Mammoths (the Western Hemisphere version of elephants), along with horses, had become extinct in the western world thousands of years before the events the Book of Mormon could be referencing.¹

A civilization develops but can't be found

Over the following centuries, a sophisticated civilization was said to have developed. A temple like Solomon's was built (2 Nephi 5:16), great cities were built with many synagogues (Alma 21:2, 4), an elaborate system of measurement and coinage was worked out (Alma 11:4-19). By B.C. 46 reference is made to “their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries... behold, there are many books and many records of every kind...” (Helaman 3:14-15). Earlier in the same chapter reference is made to “the people who went forth became exceeding expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement” (v. 7).

Where are the remains of this civilization? In other places in the world, remains of such civilizations in Israel, Persia, Turkey, Italy, Egypt, etc. are easily seen.

The area of this activity seems to be fairly well defined: “And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east” (v. 8).

Looking at a map of the Americas, Mormons have realized the only place that could fit this description is southern Mexico and Guatemala. Accordingly, they have much interest in archaeological investigations of ancient Mayan ruins found in that general area. Yet, as noted below, nothing has been found to confirm the historical accuracy of the *Book of Mormon*.

In the world of Mormon archaeology, Thomas Ferguson is a well-known name. He believed the Book of Mormon to be divinely inspired and felt that proving its historical accuracy would greatly advance acceptance of the faith. In 1952 he started the New World Archaeological Foundation which was still operating in 1999. While Ferguson initially thought it would be easy to find proof that the book was accurate, he eventually gave up and lost faith in its historical accuracy. Likewise, after much work on the various sites in Central America, the National Geographic Society made the following observation in 1998: “Archaeologists and other scholars have long probed the hemisphere's past, and the Society does not know of anything found so far that has substantiated the Book of Mormon.” In

1996, the Smithsonian Institution commented that the “Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book”²

What the archaeologists were looking for was Hebrew or Egyptian writings, pottery or buildings with distinctively Middle Eastern patterns, paintings of horses, cows, etc. As noted above, these were not found. The Smithsonian added the comment: “Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts [before A.D. 1492] have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune [having obscure language] stones which have been found in Greenland.”³

As we know from Biblical archaeology, many confirming discoveries did not come to light until the past 100 years. Therefore we acknowledge that because something has not been found does not mean it will not ever be found. So Mormons must hold to the belief that eventually archaeological confirmation of the *Book of Mormon* will be found. To this date, however, they have experienced little but disappointment.



The Hill Cumorah

As Bible readers, we are accustomed to reading of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Damascus, Rome, etc. These are all names of cities that still exist and are readily found on modern maps. So our curiosity and suspicions are aroused when we read of Zarahemla, Desolation, Ammonihah, Moriaton, Omner, Gid, etc. as cities of the Jewish civilization in the New World. Where are these places? We’ve never heard of them and we don’t find them on current maps.

But finally we come to a place that is on the map: “the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah” (Mormon 6:2). It is there that Mormon (a great

Nephite leader c. A.D. 385) is said to have hidden the plates (v. 6) and it is there that Joseph Smith claimed he found them. It is also said that Mormon's son Moroni hid additional plates which Joseph Smith claims to have found (Mormon 8:14-15; Moroni 10:2). The hill Cumorah is in the Finger Lakes district of New York State near the town of Manchester, New York. Mormon's reputed description of the area as "a land of many waters, rivers and fountains" (Mormon 6:4) certainly fits as does his description of the movement of armies between two lakes.

What doesn't fit reality, however, is his description that "the whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea" (Mormon 1:7). This was supposed to be in A.D. 322 in west-central New York State.

Where are the remains of all these buildings? They have not been discovered.



Hill Cumorah: no evidence of battle

Further, according to Mormon, there was a great battle in which over 300,000 warriors died. Where are their remains and the accompanying weapons of war? They have never been found.

There are many archaeological confirmations of events recorded in the Bible and more keep showing up. Many of us have seen the remains of Solomon's stables at

Megiddo, the inscription in Hezekiah's tunnel, the extensive excavations at Lachish, the synagogue where Christ taught at Capernaum, the great stones from Solomon's and Herod's temples. We've read translations of the inscriptions on the Moabite Stone and Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem. There is no doubt about the historicity of events recorded in the Bible.

As we have noted, such confirmation of the accuracy of the historical accounts given in the *Book of Mormon* is completely lacking. Therefore, before even considering the theological teachings of the Book, we are fully justified in suspecting it is a fanciful invention as opposed to any heavenly revelation.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. 2008 Ency. Brit. Articles on "Horses" and "Anthropology and Archaeology"
2. This information is readily found from a Google search on "Mormon Archaeology"
3. Ibid.

Remember the Sparrows

"I watch as a sparrow alone upon a rooftop" (Psa 102:7).



A lonely, insignificant little bird without flock or even a mate is one example of what King David uses to try to express his own feelings. He is in isolation, feeling forsaken by others, a deep aching loneliness, and sadness to the point of despair. He can't eat or sleep because he feels so attacked, alone, small, abandoned, and helpless. So David mourns. He describes himself as a rough, drab little bird exposed for all to see how pitiful and vulnerable it is. No one who

will love it or protect it or care what happens to it. Imagine how David feels. Can you remember when you have felt this way? No one should have to endure being treated this way, but unless your heart is aching right now, you will gain nothing from I have to say further — nothing.

The good news is your actions, even your life, will **not** go unnoticed by those who see your true value — especially God.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Mat 10:29-31).

Come to think of it, God's people are a lot like sparrows in more ways than one. In order to know what those ways are, one must view the example of a sparrow's life. Fly on the wings of a sparrow with me.

House sparrows are plain-looking, little, gray-brown birds with plump bodies and short powerful beaks designed for eating seed. Such sparrows are not native to America. They were originally brought here, probably from England in around 1851-2. They're immigrants, too. In fact, these little birds have become the most widely distributed bird in the world. That and the fact that there are so many of them have made them the most commonly recognized bird in the world. Nearly everybody knows what a sparrow is, but people take little notice of them. I wouldn't say God's people are vast in number, but they are viewed as common. There is nothing exciting about them that the average person would take notice of them compared to celebrities, executives, or other such rich popular people.

I fed a sparrow once. It chose me. It fluttered in front of me waiting for my outstretched hand. It rested on my thumb and ate crumbs from my palm. I was ecstatic that something that lives so wild could be so tame. Sparrows love wheat the best. Wheat is wholesome. It has a wonderful earthy smell during harvest that reminds me of comfort and kitchen baking. It's like the feeling of satisfaction after a hard day's work in the field. A blade of wheat has kernels of grain — grains of Truth — that has to be separated from the chaff before being eaten. Both human and bird alike have to have these grains pounded into flour before being able to

digest it just as Truth must be fully understood in order to apply it. The sparrow has to keep grit (fine gravel) in its crop to grind every piece of food it swallows for this very purpose. If we don't have the grit to discern right from wrong and to face the truth, we would not survive either.

Sparrows are very gregarious. That means outgoing and friendly. They try to incorporate themselves into the flocks of other species like robins and cardinals for example. They can fly as high as the observation deck of the Empire State Building to be with other birds or to seek food. But most birds don't like the sparrow. They drive them away. Those who do not seek to rid them from their territory will try to kill and eat them. Sparrows are prey for several larger birds. And as if that wasn't enough, cats and squirrels eat their eggs and kill their babies. Sparrows are viciously attacked by nearly every other bird in nature because they are seen as being too small and weak to defend themselves. Jesus warns us to expect such treatment. "The world hated me, therefore they will hate you also."

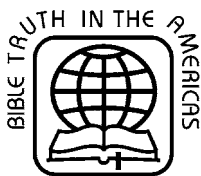
The sparrow is one of the very few species of bird that mates for life like the dove. They typically lay 4-5 eggs. Here is the number four signifying "gospel" and five signifying "grace". It also reminds me of the parable of the talents when comparing the number of babies that survive to adulthood. Birds who do not find both nest and mate often serve as helpers for mated pairs, just as God's people are to help others in their flock who are in need. This trait to be a helper is unique to sparrows. This is to develop their maternal instinct while becoming more visible to other single birds thus increasing their chances of being chosen as a mate. Also while a single bird is seeking a nested family to become a helper for, they could even replace a lost mate

The last thing about sparrows is that they often have no set habitat — no land area of their own for nesting. Other birds drive them away. Since most birds are bigger or more aggressive than the sparrow, the sparrow usually loses out. So they have to be resourceful. They have to settle for whatever homes they can find. Sometimes sparrows will use the abandoned nest site of other species of birds. But here's another very unique trait of this sturdy little bird: they go where their troublemakers fear to tread. Sparrows are fearless! They prefer to nest as close to human dwellings as possible. As sparrows seek to be close to humans so believers seek to be close to God. When sparrows can't find a fortified, enclosed site like a hole in a tree, they seek the tops of drain pipes, holes in garages, and the like. They love neon signs for the warmth and shelter from attack it provides. They will do anything to provide protection for their babies. If the tabernacle of Moses had eaves, you can bet it would have been full of sparrows!

"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God" (Psa 84:2-3).

The next time you see an ordinary little sparrow remember that you are not alone and that you are important because God cares what happens to you.

Deborah Ramos (North Houston, TX)



Bible Mission News

2012 Trinidad & Tobago Bible School



The Caribbean island of Tobago is only 6.2 miles wide and 26 miles long, covered with rainforest, rimmed with pristine beaches and home to some of the most amazing brothers and sisters in Christ.

The annual Trinidad & Tobago Bible School alternates between the two sister islands, and this year the Mount

Grace ecclesia in Tobago was the host. The gathering was larger than usual due to brethren arriving for the All Caribbean Youth Week, which took place in Tobago the week following the Bible School. Due to all of the visitors flying in from Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Guyana and North America, the venue for the Bible School had to be relocated from the hilltop ecclesial hall down to the John Dial Community Center. In addition to being large enough to host the anticipated crowd of 120 brethren, the Community Center sits right above Hillsborough Bay and had a breath-taking panoramic view of the Atlantic Ocean.



John Dial Community Center

The theme for the Bible School was taken from James 5:8, “establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord.” Bro. Ted Hodge Jr. from Ontario, Canada, and Bro. David Andrews, from Georgetown, Guyana led the week’s studies. Bro. Ted’s classes focused on the book of Galatians and centered around the theme of “Faith which Worketh by Love” (Galatians 5:6), while Bro. David’s classes were entitled “Secrets of the Kingdom” (Mark 4:11) and focused on Jesus’ parables.

The Bible School began on Sunday, July 29th with memorial service and an exhortation by Bro. Ted which followed the theme of “the cup” through Scripture — from its first appearance in the butler’s dream in Genesis to the “cup” that Jesus partook of during his death on the cross. Even as grapes must first be pressed into a cup to produce a pleasing drink, so the “cup” we have been given may involve

pressing trials before joy. We then shared in the Lord's cup and began our week of Bible school mindful of how we have been called to follow Jesus' example of taking in faith the "cup" the Father had set before him.

Following the memorial service, the 2012 Truth Corps team had the opportunity to introduce themselves and share their experiences from spending the two weeks prior preaching and supporting the ecclesial in Guadalajara, Mexico. Introductions finished, we had our first of many generous lunches that would be served at the Bible School. Over the week we were treated to fried King fish, baked chicken, roti, pelau, sweet potato, rice, mango curry (as well as many other curries) and macaroni pie, just to name a few dishes the Sisters lovingly served.



The schedule for the week was packed; the first class each morning started at 9am, followed by a brief break before the second morning class. Following that, the two speakers would take a seat at the front of the room and field questions from the audience about the day's studies. After the Q&A hour wound down, we broke for lunch, which was served there at the community center. After

lunch we took our seats again for the third class, followed by another Q&A session. While the adults learned about Galatians and the Parables, the Truth Corps team led the Sunday School lessons for the kids in a convenient landing tucked behind the stairs on the lower level. Aided by the Mt. Grace Ecclesia's 7-foot tall painting of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the Truth Corps members taught the kids about Daniel's time in Babylon. After the lesson, the kids made crafts based on the day's story, and at the end of the week, they put on a presentation for the Bible School.



The afternoons and evenings were reserved for fellowship and preaching activities. The Mount Grace ecclesia had planned a busy schedule of canvassing, public lectures, radio addresses and open-air presentations for the port city of Scarborough. Around 5pm, the Truth Corps team, local brethren, and visiting brethren would gather at the Scarborough PRDI, and while half stayed to support the public lecture, the other half would canvass the harbor area. These activities were so well



Preparing to canvass

supported and received, we found ourselves wishing we had brought more literature to distribute! The public lecture topics for the week were “Who is Lucifer?”, “Is the Soul Immortal?” and “Is God One or Three?”; each night several contacts showed up as a result of the distributed leaflets or through the encouragement of the local brethren. After each class, everyone stayed for another hour of refresh-

ments and robust discussion about the evening’s topic. Then it was off to bed to get rested up for another full day.

The local brethren did an amazing job of coordinating the transportation, accommodations, meals and schedule. It’s likely that none of us realized how much “behind the scenes” time and effort went into ensuring the week ran well. What an example of letting “thine alms ... be in secret!” Many thanks goes out to all those involved in the coordination of the week.

Like any Bible School, one of the critical components is fellowship. The Bible School allowed for old friendships to be rekindled, new ones to be formed, and brethren from neighboring islands to share in each others’ joys and trials. Younger brethren from ecclesias that lacked elders were able to gain wisdom and encouragement from those much wiser than themselves, which the elders were able to benefit from the enthusiasm and strength of the youth. The week was full of great Bible studies, late night conversations, and meaty discussions around God’s word. Several times throughout the week brethren mentioned that in sharing in fellowship with brethren from different countries, backgrounds and cultures, we were having a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD)

Truth Corp 2012

Truth Corps completed its 43rd consecutive year of work in early August. This year the team spent two weeks in Guadalajara Mexico, followed by a week in Tobago. The team promoted classes in Guadalajara for the Bible Center and at Lake Chapala, about an hour outside the city. We were very pleased that so many new students came to the classes as a result of the work of the team. The work with these new students is now continuing in the capable hands of the brothers and sisters in Guadalajara. In Tobago, the team participated in the Bible School and had the opportunity to work with the young people. The following paragraph describes the experiences from one the Truth Corps members themselves:

The work we did this summer benefitted the team as much as it did the ecclesia's we were visiting and the strangers we were teaching the truth to. One of the greatest things I took away from Truth Corps 2012 was a genuine realization of how special our faith is. I grew up in the truth, encouraged by parents who drove me to meeting and Bible classes and promoted a life of faith. As I spent time with those who found the faith later in life, seeing first hand their struggle against angry family members trying to prevent their progress, or communities and societies inhibiting such beliefs, or culture and tradition which carves opposing paths — I gained a new perspective to the religion I believe in. I have a deeper understanding of its beauty and how precious it is. As a result, I gained confidence in preaching, enthusiasm to live a more godly life in the short days before Christ returns, and desire to continue in the faith despite any trials thrown my way. I learned to never limit God — to not prevent the seed from being sown because you think someone will never accept Christ, or because you feel you are unable or insufficient (2Cor.12:9). God gave each of us exactly what was needed to preach His message. So redeem the time and live for God while we yet have life!

Meg Milne (Brampton, ON)

North to Alaska!



Bro. Stan Wilkinson of the Glendale, Arizona ecclesia is no stranger to bicycle riding, even at the age of 73 years young. Seven years ago Bro. Stan travelled by himself from San Diego to Boston, some 3400 miles, in 42 days, averaging 100 miles per day on travelling days and he encountered no problems other than flat tires and headwinds.

In May 2013, he plans to do a fundraising event for CBMA/C in the form of a bike-a-thon from Phoenix Arizona to Fairbanks Alaska. He plans stops along the way at ecclesias for “mini-bike-a-thon” events. In preparation for the event, he will be riding from Arizona to El Paso in October 2012 (400 miles one way) and then to the Palm Springs Bible School in February 2013 (600 miles round trip) from Arizona.

He already has more than 30 riders interested in joining him for different parts of the ride, and a sponsor to cover his expenses. In addition, several ecclesias have offered to host events along the way.

Watch for more details throughout the year and especially as the time for the race grows closer. If you or your ecclesia would like to participate, please contact Bro. Joel Rosenau at joel-rosenau@shaw.ca. You will be able to follow the race on the CBMA Facebook page. Details on contributing to this fundraiser will follow later in the year.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/C Publicity*

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We rejoice that MIKE WILSON put on the saving name of Christ in baptism. He was introduced to the Truth by Sis. Miriam Simmons. Due to his blindness, he had not read the Bible, but eagerly embraced the hope within. We are also pleased to announce that Bro. Mike Wilson and Sis. Miriam Simmons were married September 22, 2012. Also, Sis. O'Bera June, who had been in isolation many years, has moved to our area. After talking with her, we welcome her to our ecclesia.

It is with sadness we report the falling asleep of both Sis. Ouida Henry on June 18, 2012, and Bro. Mack Lucas on September 24, 2012. Both had been battling illness, and though Sis. Ouida had only been a member of our ecclesia for a few years, and Bro. Mack was one of the original members, the loss of them both is greatly felt. Our prayers are with Sis. Lori Lucas and their children, and Bro. Steve Lucas, and Sis. Julie Ishman, and their families.

We have welcomed the following brothers and sisters from other states and countries: Carl and Gina Parry (Salsbury Adelaide, Australia); Tim and Karen Bering (Saltillo, Mexico); Rob Webb (Hamilton Greenway, ON); Blanche Wallace (Freehill, Jamaica); Tiffany Bevans (Reseda, CA); and Linda Putnick (Ann Arbor, MI). We also wish to thank Bre. Carl Parry, Wesley Booker and Larry Beutel for their words of exhortation.

Fred Bearden

BRANT COUNTY, ON

On July 1, 2011, the Brant County, ON Christadelphian Ecclesia, a new Central Fellowship ecclesia, was established in the Brantford area. Our place of meeting is the Bellview Community Hall, 55 Tom St., Eagle Place, Brantford, ON.

Our Sunday school begins at 9:30 am with the Memorial service following at 11:00 am with Sunday afternoon or evening Bible study varying. Tuesday Bible class is at 7:30 pm and Senior CYC is held at 7:30 pm every other Friday evening in the homes of brothers and sisters.

The following are the founding members of the new Brant County Ecclesia, former members of the Brantford, ON Ecclesia including: Barbara Casson, Keith and Carolyn Easton, Peggy Easton, Rhonda Gallant, Barrie and Cathy Heywood, Ben and Lisa Jennings, Dan and Sarah Jennings, Jim and Shirley Ann Jennings, Naomi Jennings, Peter Jennings, Ed and Denise Kanno, Scott and Brenda Krakar, Donald and Miriam Luff, Joel Luff, Michael and Anna Moore, Sasha Moore, Lloyd and Joan Newth, Ken and Debby Read, Mark and Jennifer Read, Daniel and Ashley Robinson, Trevor and Heather Salisbury, Gary and Shirley Smith, Joyce Webb, Graeme and Carol Wilson, David and Nicole Wisniewski, Sarah Wisniewski, and John and Trish Woods.

Since July 1, 2011, the following brothers and sisters have been accepted as members at the Brant County Ecclesia: Doreen Jones, Kerry Sakaluk, John and Natalie Easton, Bekah Robertson, Ben Robertson, Jennifer Robertson, and Grant and Rachel Pryer from the Brantford, ON Ecclesia and Chesed Mindorff from Vernon, BC.

We thank the following brothers for their encouraging words of exhortation: Bill Jennings (Hamilton MacNab, ON); Henry Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Mark Newth (Royal Oak, MI); Glen Abel (Vernon Okanagan, BC); David Kanno (London, ON); and Frank Abel, Richard Morgan, Joel Robinson, Kevin Spry, and Matt Trowel (Hamilton Book Road, ON).

On Saturday, December 31, 2011, we witnessed the marriage of Bro. Peter Jennings to Sis. Chesed Mindorff. We pray for our heavenly Father's richest blessings on them as they continue their life together before Him. Bro. Peter and Sis. Chesed Jennings moved west at the end of March 2012, to the province of Alberta. Both Peter and Chesed are missed as they were active and faithful workers at the Brant County Ecclesia. We commend them to the loving care of the brothers and sisters of the Calgary, AB Ecclesia.

Brant County's first study day was held on Saturday, May 5, 2012. Bro. Matt Trowel (Hamilton Book Road, ON) presented an interesting study on the topic, "The Empty Tomb". We are very thankful to him for his study presentation and his ministrations the following day.

On Saturday, September 1, 2012, we were blessed to witness the baptism of JAMIN MOORE, son of our Bro. Michael and Sis. Anna Moore, after giving a good confession of his faith. We pray for our heavenly Father's richest blessings as our new brother commences his new life in Christ Jesus.

On Tuesday, September 4, 2012, we were blessed with a Bible class presentation on the subject, "They Knew Not the Time of Their Visitation," presented to us by Bro. Jim Cowie (Queensland, Aust.). We had good attendance at this special Bible class. We are very thankful to Bro. Jim for this interesting and worthwhile presentation.

On Tuesday, September 25, 2012, we held our first outreach seminar at our place of meeting on the topic, "The Coming Russian Superpower Destroyed by God in Israel". Two presentations were made by Bre. Frank Abel and Matt Drywood (Hamilton Book Road, ON) on Bible prophecy and current events respectively. We were blessed with the attendance of eight visitors to our special effort; two from personal contact, two from seeing the newspaper ads, and four because of leaflet distribution. Follow-up lectures are being engaged in for the month of October.

All ecclesial correspondence should be sent to: Brant County Christadelphians, PO Box 21047, RPO Lynden Park Mall, Brantford, ON N3R 7W9 Canada; or by email to: BrantCountyChristadelphians@gmail.com.

H. Gary Smith

BRANTFORD, ON

We rejoice with our family in heaven that on September 19, 2012, SHOSHANNA BOWEN, daughter of Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Charlene Bowen, was baptized into the hope of Israel. From September 19-25, 2012, we have also enjoyed the fellowship and ministrations of Bro. Matt Norton and Bro. David Clark-Smith (Lismore, NSW, Aust.). We thank Bro. Matt for the encouragement and exposition he provided, including the Prophecy Day held in Mississauga on the theme, "The Revelation, Examined and Explained". MP3 recordings of the classes are available from www.brantfordchristadelphians.com. We also thank Bro. Simon O'Grady for visiting us and leading our Bible class on July 22, 2012.

Despite outstanding concerns, in light of the confirmation we received on September 16, 2012, "that there are no outstanding matters considered by the brothers and sisters of

the Brant County Ecclesia to be of such a fundamental nature that it warrants a breach in fellowship”, and with a desire to move in a loving and more positive direction the Brantford Ecclesia, as of September 16, 2012, has voted to acknowledge the formation of the Brant County Ecclesia.

We therefore acknowledge the transfer of the following founding brothers and sisters of this ecclesia: Barbara Casson, Peggy Easton, Keith and Carolyn Easton, Rhonda Gallant, Barrie and Cathy Heywood, Dan and Sarah Jennings, Ben and Lisa Jennings, Jim and Shirley Ann Jennings, Naomi Jennings, Peter Jennings, Ed and Denise Kanno, Scott and Brenda Krakar, Don and Miriam Luff, Joel Luff, Mike and Anna Moore, Sasha Moore, Lloyd and Joan Newth, Ken and Debby Read, Mark and Jennifer Read, Dan and Ashley Robinson, Trevor and Heather Salisbury, Gary and Shirley Smith, Joyce Webb, Graeme and Carol Wilson, David and Nicole Wisniewski, Sarah Wisniewski, and John and Trish Woods.

We also acknowledge the transfer of the following members who have requested to transfer to the Brant County Ecclesia since that time: John and Natalie Easton, Doreen Jones, Rebekah Robertson, and Kerry Sakaluk. In addition, we also acknowledge the transfer of Grant and Rachel Pryer as of September 24, 2012, and Ben Robertson and Jen Robertson as of September 25, 2012. We echo the words of the Psalmist: “Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation” (Psa 85:7).

Daniel Billington

BROOKLYN, NY

In July, we rejoiced at the baptism of JOSEPH (PRINCE) JOHNSON, son of Bro. Leroy Johnson of May Pen, Jamaica.

In August we joined with the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia in mourning the falling asleep of Bro. Ron Badlu. He was the youngest brother in the flesh of Sis. Christine Drepaal (Brooklyn, NY), Sis. Elaine David (Norfolk, VA), Bro. Harold (Manhattan, NY), and Bre. Joe and Richard (South Ozone Park, NY).

Outreach activities included a six-week Bible seminar and a weekly literature distribution during the four months of June to September by the retiree group in key areas of Brooklyn and Queens. The distribution was accompanied by pin-point talks by the brothers. Even a few non-retirees joined the party on occasions. Public response was encouraging.

We joined the Manhattan Ecclesia in its yearly one-day fraternal at Westchester. It was a memorable, refreshing, early September day. Early in June, there was the two-day Metro Fraternal, at which Bro. John Pople gave a unique exposition of the Song of Solomon under the theme, “Solomon and Delilah”.

The role of women in Scripture was further highlighted in Bro. Selvin Sawyers’ exhortation, as he and his family ministered at our ecclesia. Bro. Selvin also did our Genesis Workshop that Sunday afternoon. We do thank him.

Clive Drepaal

CRANSTON, RI

We are very pleased to have received into fellowship and membership, Sis. Sarah Telles, by way of transfer from the Norfolk, VA Ecclesia on May 1, 2012.

We are very pleased and thankful that the “This Is Your Bible” television program has resumed in Rhode Island, thanks to the programs produced on the West Coast. We

are thankful for their work in providing the programming and we are thankful that once again the name “Christadelphian” is before the Rhode Island public. We thank the following visiting brethren for their words of exhortation: Bre. Eric Pride and Jim Rutkovski (Westerly, RI), and Philip Hazard (North Atlanta, GA).

We thank Bre. Bob Corbeille (Granite State, NH) and Frank Locke (Westerly, RI) for their Public Bible Talks on the theme, “The Bible, the Book for Today”. Our present Public Bible Talks theme is, “Christendom Astray From the Teaching of the Bible”. Our own brethren have presented the first three talks.

The Cranston CYC hosted their Twelfth Annual Bible Study Weekend in May. Bro. Allen Laban (Baltimore, MD) led the classes on the theme, “Godly Relationships”. There were approximately sixty teenagers and young people in attendance at the classes.

Our Bro. Brandon Entwistle returned home from an extended stay in China. He has since returned to Shanghai to continue teaching English at a school. He is also fully engaged in the workings of a very small ecclesia there.

We are saddened to report that Sis. Carol Houghton, wife of Bro. Paul, fell asleep in Christ on August 4, 2012. Sis. Carol was of a “meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price”. She was indeed a “mother in Israel”. She was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ at the Worcester, MA Ecclesia on November 18, 1955. She died in full assurance of hope, looking forward to the time when “we shall be like Him, raised above all weakness”. Her patient waiting has ended. Her awakening will be when she, along with the faithful of every age, “in glorious beauty see His face”.

At the same time, we rejoice and give thanks for a new birth in Christ. On August 18, 2012, ERIC LEWIN, son of Bro. Kevin and Sis. Brenda Lewin, put on the saving name of Jesus Christ. From his youth, our young Bro. Eric, has known the Holy Scriptures and has been an active member of our Sunday school and CYC. We are certain that our ecclesia will benefit by his enthusiasm and dedication.

Paul Houghton

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

We apologize that we have not submitted ecclesial news recently. In the past two years we have enjoyed visitors from our Detroit area ecclesias as well as many other ecclesias in the US, Canada and other areas of the world. We are thankful for efforts of the following brethren who exhorted us from God’s word: Ken Comito, Jacob Styles, Ryan Vaughn, Mike Livermore, Josiah Hewitson, Ken Sommerville, Frank Abel, Matt Jackson, Dave Giordano, Jim Cowie, Mark Newth, Joe Hill, Jim Styles, David Deakin, Greg Muniz, and Paul Jackson.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for our new additions. In November 2011, we rejoiced with Bro. Simon and Sis. Hannah Gore at the birth of their son, Ewen William. In December 2011, we rejoiced with Bro. Paul and Sis. Mary Jane Styles at the birth of their daughter, Eden Abigail.

We were also reminded of our mortality during this period of time. We are saddened by the passing of Sis. Catherine Stewart on September 20, 2011. She was baptized in 1946 and had been a faithful member of the Detroit Livonia Ecclesia ever since. We also mourn the loss of our dear Sis. Mary Bobis who fell asleep in our Lord on December 30, 2011 after a long struggle with cancer. The Livonia Ecclesia would like to thank all our brothers and sisters for their prayers and concern during this difficult time. Both of our dear sisters will be greatly missed as we await the Lord’s return.

We had the following brothers and sisters transfer to other ecclesias during this period. We miss them, including: Jim and Sue, Andrew, Nathan, and Rebekah Styles to Simi Hills, CA; Sis. Jen Jones to Lismore, Aust.; Lindbergh and Shirley VanReuter to Ann Arbor, MI; and Grace Kirian to Toledo, OH. We rejoice with the additions of Sis. Jen Kowicki (South Adelaide, Aust.) and Bro. Tim and Sis. Christi Bryan, and their sons, TJ and Joey, from Kouts, IN.

Over the past period God has blessed our Bible seminars. We have an average of eight interested friends with two families who regularly attend all our ecclesial functions including Hanover Bible School. This has been a great blessing for our ecclesia.

Paul Styles

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We welcome by way of transfer from the London, ON Ecclesia, the following brothers and sisters: John and Joanne Andrews, Donna Barr, Leah Barr, Ron Broda, Joanne Webb, Tom and Rachel Giampa, Ron and Jennifer Gordon, Bob Howes, Pat Scott, Bill Scott, Michael and Pauline Walker, and Roger and Denette Walker.

Although members of Greenaway, these brothers and sisters will operate as a satellite ecclesia, meeting twice monthly on Sundays and each Tuesday for Bible class. For details of time and location, please contact either the Walkers at 519-471-0438, or mcwalker43@hotmail.com; or the Andrews at 519-474-7127 or joanieandrews@sympatico.ca

Tom Thorp

HONESDALE, PA

Our ecclesia is very happy to welcome Gary Burnard as an active brother again as of September 16, 2012.

Stephen DeMarco

LONDON, ON

With reference to the notice of transfer to Hamilton Greenaway, the London AB's have agreed that there is little to be gained from being in constant agitation about the matter and simply accept their departure. Notwithstanding under the circumstances we are not prepared to commend them to Greenaway. This is as far as we are prepared to go; the 17 members have made a decision and we are prepared to accept it, trusting that one day we shall be able to resolve our differences in a manner becoming brethren.

Ron Kidd

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

We are sad to transfer our long time Bro. Rod and Sis. Dianne Massey to the Vernon, BC Ecclesia as well as Bro. Nathanael and Sis. Nicole Massey to the Kamloops, BC Ecclesia. We pray our heavenly Father will bless them in their new ecclesias. With the departure of Bro. Rod, our new recording brother is Bro. Jonathan Lawrence and all email correspondence can be sent to him at pgchristadelphians@hotmail.com.

We would welcome any brothers or sisters who are thinking of traveling or even moving to our area. The help would be greatly appreciated in fellowship and ministry. We will not be holding our annual fraternal gathering this year due to our few numbers but instead will hold a study day on Oct 27-28, 2012, on the subject: "Six Night Visions of Zechariah," by Bro. Nathan Bartholomew.

We have welcomed and thank the following brethren over the last year: Graham

Osborn, Terry Houghton, Peter Lawrence, Rick Evans, Dean Montgomery, Adam Jones, and Dan Sargent. We also thank our Bro. Tim Osborn for doing a study day as well as Bro. David Lloyd who spoke at our fraternal in May. Their encouragement and words are very much appreciated.

Jonathan Lawrence

ROGUE VALLEY, OR

In September, Bro. Graeme Osborn, (Vernon Okanagan, BC) gave a Bible class entitled, "Tell It to Future Generations", and exhorted us on Sunday. We were blessed again with the baptism of one of our Sunday school scholars, TIMOTHY YOSHIDA. On January 5, 2013, Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilton Brisbane, Aust.) will conduct a study day on the topic, "Gibeah of Saul". Contact Bro. Randy Yoshida, our Recording Brother for more information if you plan on attending at: 541-479-5358.

Henry Wisniewski

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following visitors: Stan and Eunice Newton (Pomona, CA); David and Erin Clubb (Simi Hills, CA); Bucky and Debi Wilhoit (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Ruth Bittinger (Joplin, MO); Sandra Maggard (Albuquerque, NM); Stephen Berry (Kouts, IN); Landon Wolfe, Levi Wolfe, and Jeremy and Leah Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Miah Hefner, Amanda Buck, Gene and Seba Fay Farley, and Andrea Banta (Austin Leander, TX); Ralph and Elizabeth Hollenbeck, Ronnie and Kristen Hefner, and Nathan Daniels (North Houston, TX); Garth and Kerri Maier, and Sarah Maier (East TX); and Jorge and Julie Garcia (Houston, TX). We thank Bre. Stan Newton and Bucky Wilhoit for their words of exhortation and David Clubb for his Sunday school class.

On June 2, 2012, we rejoiced as we witnessed the joining as one of Bro. Caleb Clubb and Sis. Megan Holmes. It is truly a joy to see two of like precious faith unite in serving our heavenly Father and dedicating their efforts to the edification of His Son's body. We seek God's blessing upon them as they journey together toward God's kingdom.

We are pleased to announce that in August we welcomed Sis. Debby Compton from the East Texas Ecclesia and in September we welcomed Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin from the Dallas area. We are very thankful for the addition of these two sisters and the wonderful boost to our Sunday school.

John A Clubb

RUN FOR THE EVERLASTING CURE NOVEMBER 24, 2012

The purpose of this event is to come together to pray for those who suffer in our midst as well as those on the prayer list posted on the Facebook site and to be posted on the run site, as well as to pray for our everlasting cure, Christ, that he return soon and end all pain and suffering. This is our 8th year holding this event and we have ecclesias all over the world who carve a small part out of their day each November on the last Saturday, to pray together. We follow the prayer with a 5 km walk or run that helps bond our brothers and sisters together. Please participate....it doesn't matter the number of people, and it's not a flashy event. Please check out our website at: <http://www.runfortheeverlastingcure.org/index.html> and our facebook site at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/5595409986/events/>. Prayer requests can be emailed to Kevin and Rebekah Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org, and we can post those to the shared page.

Kevin and Rebekah Hunter

Minute Meditation

Be Doers of the Word

Leonardo da Vinci said, "I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do."

Leonardo's words echo the inspired counsel found in the book of James, "Do not merely listen to the word [of God], and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." James elaborates, "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does."

We do not know if Leonardo da Vinci ever read the epistle of James, but he surely captured the importance of being doers of the word and not hearers only. James explains just how important this principle is in God's eyes: "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

There are many Scriptural examples where people knew the right thing to do, but did not do it. An outstanding example from our readings recently is in the prophecy of Jeremiah. After the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and carried away captive most of the Israelites, the people left in the land wanted to know what God wanted them to do. They came to Jeremiah and asked him to ask God for direction: "Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do." They promised, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us. Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the LORD our God."

"Ten days later the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, 'If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I am grieved over the disaster I have inflicted on you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him,' declares the LORD, 'for I am with you and will save you and deliver you from his hands. I will show you compassion so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your land.'"

What the people decided to do when they heard this message from God was so wrong, especially after they had just said that they would obey whatever God said. First the people tell Jeremiah, "You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you." Then they decide not to do what God told them to do. They later tell Jeremiah, "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! We will certainly do everything we said we would." Not always are those who deliberately disobey the word of God quite so blatant as these people who rejected God's message. Sadly, the end result is the same in that when people

do whatever they want to do and not what the Lord commands, there are consequences. The fate of these people should be a warning to all of us to take seriously the word of God and obey it.

Faith is one of the essential requirements for salvation. James in his epistle makes it quite plain that it is impossible to show our faith without action. We need to do the righteous deeds that we know should be done. James calls those who disagree with this principle as being vain, from a Greek word meaning foolish or shallow. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

We do not have a choice when it comes to God's commandments. God did not give Moses the ten suggestions. When God told Israel to rest on the Sabbath, He really meant it, and the penalty for the man who disobeyed by picking up sticks was death.

What are you and I doing about obeying our LORD? Are His commandments subject to discussion or do we submit willingly? Too many people in the world today want to play fast and loose with God's commands, and we as His sons and daughters must not allow the thinking of the world around us regarding tolerance towards sin to affect our thinking and actions.

Once we know what we are to do, we must do it to the best of our ability. Leonardo da Vinci was right when he said, "Being willing is not enough; we must do". Jesus tells us what it will be like when he sits on his throne at his return to establish his kingdom: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' " We must act on our beliefs if we hope to be granted a place in the kingdom. James was correct when he said, "Faith without works is dead."

We pray that the LORD will give us the wisdom and faith to be workers together with Him, doing His commandments and looking forward to serving with His son in His soon coming kingdom.

Robert J. Lloyd

Great stress is laid in all the Scriptures on this feature — the doing of the will of God. Jesus brings it out forcibly, when he says to certain, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? He that DOETH the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." So does James: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers ONLY." The rule of action is therefore exceedingly simple. Are we acting in conformity with Christ? Are we doing the will of God? This is a simple question that will enable everybody to test themselves. The will of God is luminously indicated, and it will be our own fault if we continue ignorant of it, in the many features of it affecting practical life.

Robert Roberts (The Christadelphian 1870 p. 171)

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

NOVEMBER 2012

9-11 Brothers' Weekend at Hidden Acres, New Hamburg, ON. An excellent opportunity to stimulate faith and build brotherly love through which our families and ecclesias can be strengthened; all for the glory of God. Bro Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Theme: "Get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." For information Bro Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 or email natejbadger@gmail.com.

10-11 Largo/Orlando/Sarasota, FL Study Weekend. Speaker Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX). Theme: "As A Man Thinketh In His Heart." Lunch will be provided both Saturday and Sunday. Contact: Bro. Walt Dodrill/Largo at waltdodrill@msn.com or call 727-410-0896.

10-11 Pittsburgh, PA CYC Study Weekend. Bro. Everett Muniz (Paris Ave, OH) will be speaking on "Holy Living in Perilous Times". Contact Sis. Becca Pommer at (724) 757-8582 or pghecclesia@gmail.com.

10-11 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend. "Defining the Household" by Bro. Wesley Butler (Vancouver, BC), Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC), and Bro. Simon Snobelen (Vancouver, BC). For further information contact csnobelen@csl.ca.

23-25 Austin Leander, TX Study Weekend at the HEB Camp near Leakey, TX. Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA) will be speaking on "The Parables of the Lost". To register e-mail Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net.

23-25 Washington, DC Family Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead us in classes entitled "The Pattern of the Tabernacle". Weekend fee is \$60. A \$20 deposit is required with registration. Deadline is November 12. Mail registrations to Bro. Dave Fertig, 9703 Schmidt Dr., Burke, VA 22015. For forms or information, phone 703-644-6311 or e-mail Bro. Dave at Hashawha@gmail.com.

24 Run for the Everlasting Cure is a world-wide prayer event. The purpose is to come together and pray for those who are struggling with sickness and problems, as well as to pray for the return of Christ. Prayer requests can be emailed to Kevin and Rebekah Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org. The website is www.runfortheeverlastingcure.org/index.html.

25 Ann Arbor, MI Thanksgiving Gathering at Ann Arbor Holiday Inn, 3600 Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105. Memorial Service 11am and Lecture 2pm. Lunch will be provided. Speaker: Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD).

DECEMBER 2013

29-Jan 5 Texas Youth Conference at T4C near Freestone, TX. The Texas Youth Conference is a Bible Study Conference for young Christadelphian adults who are between the ages of 17 and 35. Baptized members under the age of 17 may attend. For registration and other information please see our web site at www.texasyouthconference.com.

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)

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JANUARY 2013

5 Rogue Valley, OR Study day with Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilton Brisbane, Aust.) on the topic, "Gibeah of Saul". Contact Bro. Randy Yoshida, for more information at 541-479-5358.

FEBRUARY 2013

24-Mar 1 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales) and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

MARCH 2013

29-31 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering at T4C Camp, Freestone, Texas. Class leader Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) his topic is "Valued of God — Study of the Life of Timothy". Please contact Bro. Larry Beutel lbeutel@alsco.com.

MAY 2013

18-19 Calgary, AB Rolling Hills Study Weekend: A weekend of study, fellowship as well as assorted activities for children. Bro. Ron Ledbetter from Ontario will present the classes for adults and Sis. Cherri-Lynn will coordinate accommodation, children's activities and catering. Accommodation is available in homes and there is space for RV's and tents. Classes will be held at the Rolling Hills Community Hall. Register with dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab, or 403-964-2562.

JULY 2013

7-13 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner College, Kerrville, TX. This years teachers will be Bro. Peter King (UK), Bro. Joseph Palmer (San Diego, CA USA), and Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton, Ontario CA). Please register with Bro. Shannon Strickland, 9305 Nancy Lane, Tomball, Texas USA or Shannonjejh@att.net.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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December, 2012

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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 scapegoat 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 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?

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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 put 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

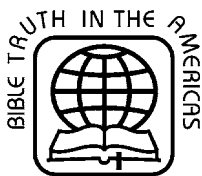
The Scripture is clear that "the disciples were called Christians *first* in Antioch" (Acts 11:26 about A.D. 40). A hundred years before this term was used, Alma records that the faithful were diligently working "that they might maintain that which was called by their enemies the cause of *Christians*" (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

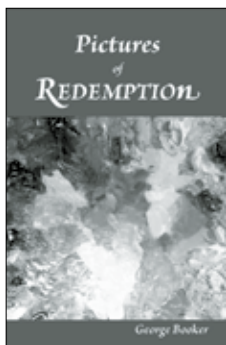
This story takes place nearly 3,000 years ago, but the spiritual challenges are familiar to today's young people. \$6.00 US (110 pages, 2011)

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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