

The
Christadelphian Tidings
of the Kingdom of God

**Guest Editorial:
Lessons from
Sisters of Old
for Sisters Today**

**Exhortation:
He Died for Me!**

**Bible Study:
Lessons from the
Book of Daniel**

**History:
Sisters at War**

Infertility

**Dare to be a
Phoebe**

Forgiveness

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Lessons from Sisters of Old for Sisters Today

The shaping of the nation of Israel

Today, women can do any job they put their mind to do and want — becoming a CEO, President of a corporation, and even a construction worker. The list is endless. Women are not the weak simple-minded women of the Victorian era, nor have they ever been. Ironically, the Victorian era is named after a woman who was a powerful Queen!

Women of the Bible have helped to shape the nation of Israel. They taught their children about the One True God and watched for the coming of the Messiah. A woman gave birth to Jesus, and women worshipped at his feet as he began his ministry. Women were among the last standing at the cross to witness Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. Women were the first at the tomb on the day of his resurrection. Jesus appeared first to a woman and gave her the joyous responsibility of carrying the message of his victory over death.

There is a reason for each woman described in the Bible. Each made a difference in her world either for good or for bad. Women will/can make a difference in their own homes, ecclesias, workplaces, and with other people with whom they come into contact. Women of the Bible sometimes made mistakes, but more importantly, they were often selfless and strong and acted for God's glory. They guide us in how we should act, by giving us examples of appropriate Christ-like behavior, as well as, at times, how we should not act.

We see women who are faithful, hospitable, prayerful, committed, prideful, judgmental, prejudiced, jealous, practicing harlotry, wanting power, marrying outside the household, being flirtatious and seductive — all living in God's vineyard. All these are examples of behavior — Good and Bad, Positive and Negative, Acceptable and Unacceptable. They teach us how to behave in a positive sense; or how not to behave.

Jezebel, Sapphira, Potiphar's wife, Athaliah, Herodias and her daughter, and Salome are all examples of completely unacceptable behavior. They are undesirable examples meant to teach us how not to conduct ourselves.

Miriam, Naomi, and Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha, are both positive and negative examples. They did things that at times were good, and at other times behaved in ways that were disappointing. We are probably more apt to resonate with them. We all sin in one way or another. Let us take a closer look at some of the most wonderful role models in scripture.

Rahab was a prostitute who turned to the LORD

A prostitute, who turned to God! A reminder to us that God forgives and offers salvation to those who seek Him. She risked her life in an act of faith when she hid the Israelite spies. When men came to her door looking for the spies,

Rahab ‘lied’ saying they had been there, but now were gone. Did she, as some people have said, LIE? She trusted in God, and as a result she and her family were saved from destruction. James 2:25 states, *“And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?”* The story of Rahab teaches us not to be judgmental *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23).

Deborah was a judge and a prophetess

“Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time” (Jdg 4:4). Her vision of the world was shaped not by the political situation of her day, but by her relationship with God. Although women in the ancient world did not usually become political leaders, Deborah was just the leader Israel needed — a prophetess who, along with Barak, heard God and believed Him, whose courage strengthened the people, enabling them to throw off foreign oppression. She was not afraid to accompany Barak to battle. What battles can we fight? We can teach our children, as Jesus told us to do: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matt 22:37-39). By following this teaching, we help all those around us whether Brethren in Christ, or our neighbors, or even strangers.

Esther – She was chosen to be Queen

She was a Jewess who was brought up by her uncle, Mordecai, a Jew, who sat in the King’s gate. She soon found favor in the King’s sight after he banished his queen, Vashti. Through Mordecai, Esther learned of Haman’s conspiracy against the Jews. She was reminded by her uncle, that perhaps God had made her Queen to meet the challenge that Haman posed to her people. Esther showed wisdom and patience in this terrible situation, facing the destruction of her people, while dealing with the King. She worked within God’s will in the situation, and used the knowledge and skills God gave her. Have we come to our own “kingdom” for God’s special purpose through us? We too need to do what is right in the sight of God, doing it wisely and using the gifts the LORD has given us.

Mary – Chosen to be the mother of the Messiah

I would be amiss if we did not look to Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, for guidance in our actions and behavior. Mary exhibited strength, knowledge of the prophets and most of all – Love for God. She exhibited these things in her response to Gabriel after he told her she was to give birth to the Messiah. In Luke 1:38 she is recorded as saying, *“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”* Also further down in verses 46-55, she extols the Lord our God in what is titled “Mary’s song”. She experienced many things during Christ’s life. I’m sure she experienced many of the things any mother does — giving birth and watching him grow up, for example. She also experienced many sorrows. Simon at the temple when Jesus was presented said *“(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed”* (Luke 2:35). The greatest sorrow came when she saw him on the cross, being shamed and tortured.

The past was alive inside her, but it was the future that filled her with joy. She would, in the kingdom, see her son again and wipe away all her tears.

Lydia was a businesswoman selling purple

Paul was in Philippi where he met Lydia. Lydia's role can be summed up in four verses:

“And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us...So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed” (Acts 16:13-15, 40).

She was a successful businesswoman in a luxury business — purple being a color that was associated with a high rank and great wealth. She was the mistress of a household who opened her home to visitors, especially Paul and those with him. Later her home was the meeting place for the believers in Philippi. Lydia comes across to us as a strong and competent person who was warm and openhearted, a believer in the Lord God, a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a leader and example to other believers. Are we hospitable? Do we open our homes to visiting brothers and sisters as well to those in our own Ecclesia?

Phoebe was a deaconess

Paul wrote to the ecclesia at Rome: *“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me” (Rom 16:1-2 NIV).*

(Her fascinating story, and example for us, is told elsewhere in this issue).

These are a few examples of our sisters of old who displayed Christ-like characteristics that we should emulate. Our walk is no easier, nor is it necessarily any harder. We can learn much from how they approached the difficulties they faced — using their guidance and strength in dealing with our own challenges. In the end, we should take comfort that we aren't alone, but can rely on those that came before us to show us the way. By learning from sisters of Old we too can be good examples for those that come after us.

“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue... Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (Prov 31:26, 30).

Mary Bilello, (Ann Arbor, MI)

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.

He Died for Me!

The character of Jesus

A beautiful example of Jesus' character is found in the gospel of Matthew:

“When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, ‘Does your teacher not pay the tax?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?’ And when he said, ‘From others.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then the sons are free. However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself’ ” (Matt 17:24-27 NIV).

What type of person is Jesus? Well, he picked his battles. He did not have to pay this temple tax. He was the son of God, and the temple was his father's house, and so he was exempt from tax. However, he did not want to offend the religious leaders of his day, so he paid the tax. What type of people should we be? Sometimes we need to follow Jesus' example in doing things that we do not really have to do in order to keep the peace — or even to set a good example of service.

But there is more to this: What was this two-drachma temple tax that Peter and Jesus were being asked to pay? Well, at the annual census, each person over the age of 20 was to give a half-shekel offering for support of the tabernacle:

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD. Everyone who is numbered in the census, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the LORD's offering. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give the LORD's offering to make atonement for your lives. You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD, so as to make atonement for your lives’ ” (Exod 30:11-16).

Atonement

This is significant: The temple tax was actually atonement money. Unless a person paid this half shekel as a ransom for his life, then a plague would come upon “them” — the community. So this incident has something to do with our atonement: being saved from our sins.

Jesus could have said to Peter, here is a shekel, enough for me and you, go and pay. But he does not. He tells Peter to: *“go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”* What type of person is Jesus? Well he is someone who might ask us to do something unusual to demonstrate our faith, like being baptized, and breaking bread to remember him.

Do you think Peter followed these instructions? I am sure that he did. But what do you make of it? The first fish that comes up, you will find a shekel in its mouth. I think what Jesus says helps us to make sense of this:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:47-50).



In this parable, the fish represent those who are raised to judgement: some good, some bad. Keep that thought in your mind — the fish represent those who are raised to judgement. John’s gospel helps us to unpick the conundrum of the coin in the fish’s mouth ever further:

“Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, do you have any fish?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat,

dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn" (John 21:4-11).

So we have a miraculous catch of fish. The disciples had been fishing all night and caught nothing, but by listening to Jesus and casting their nets on the other side of the boat, they now catch exactly 153 large fish and, miraculously, the net did not tear. What does this mean? Well, do you remember that Jesus said to Peter that he would make him a fisher of men? That obviously means that Peter would become a preacher and bring people to Jesus to be saved. I would suggest that the 153 fish here represent those righteous people who are saved at the judgement. Not one of them would be lost. So this time we have fish, not just representing those raised to judgement, good and bad, but now, specifically, those who would be saved at the judgement.

The firstborn from the dead

How does this align with the shekel found in the mouth of the first fish that was caught? I think that the first fish could symbolize the Lord Jesus Christ himself. *"He is the firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:17-18)*, or the "first fish" if you like. The first person raised to eternal life. It is through him that we are atoned for.

The silver shekel found in the fish's mouth could represent our resurrection to eternal life through the Lord Jesus. Notice that Peter did not find half a shekel, just to pay the Lord's tax, he found a whole shekel. Jesus paid the atonement money for himself and for Peter. Similarly, Jesus' death and resurrection atoned both for him and those who would believe in him.

Sometimes I think that we forget that Jesus died for us as individuals. We focus perhaps on him dying for the sins of the world. But just as he paid for Peter's individual temple tax, he also died for me, as if I were the only one. Paul has a deep appreciation of the Lord's sacrifice and love for himself as an individual:

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

We should not shy away from this part of the Lord's personality. He died for me as an individual. He loves me as an individual. This is his character. What response should we give to this? Let us follow Paul's example: *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."*

So, as we break bread and drink wine in remembrance of our Lord, we think of the way he paid the temple tax, not only for himself, but for Peter also: in like manner, in his death he redeemed all mankind.

Sarah Joiner (Portland, OR)

Mission Work

Guyana



The Beginning

On September 18, 1971, a young couple married just one year set out on the journey of a lifetime, in faith. We left our Ur: our home, our families, all that was familiar, and as we peered out the windows of the plane at the miles of unbroken jungle below us, we wondered if any people really even lived there. That sojourn of four years so long ago changed who we are forever.

We learned to bathe with a gallon of water in a bucket without contaminating it all with soap. We learned to read the lowering skies and sprint for shelter. We learned to rub clothes, to drive on the left, to dodge animals wandering on the road, to shop in an open market and so much more of daily life. We learned to look to God without the infrastructure to protect us, to really know that our lives were in God's hands, not our own. We learned to see beyond tiny shelters, mud floors daubed with cow dung, beetles and cockles and mosquitoes and cockroaches and bats. Why colonize here? Here you can live better, have servants, be someone important. You can find peace watching the punts float to and from the sugar factory carrying cane and returning empty, as you gaze across the cane fields white for harvest swaying, in the gentle breeze. The distant sound of playful children's voices floats on the air accompanied by chirping birds and singing insects. The sugar estate is a peaceful world of its own, set apart. Then we return to New Amsterdam with music blaring, dogs barking, horns blasting, roosters crowing, donkey carts rattling and creaking, men yelling orders amid greetings.

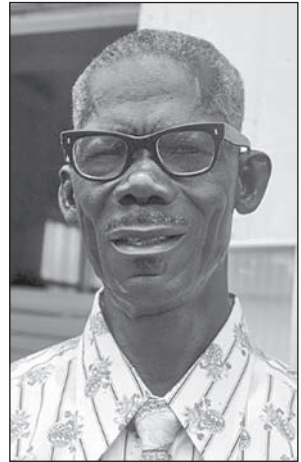


Our home.

This was the new life we found in our new home. We learned to sleep despite the heat and humidity, and stood in front of the open fridge when we wanted to remember what home felt like. We learned to cook and to eat Guyanese food, and we learned to speak and to understand Guyanese English, and quite a few British terms that we had never heard of. We learned practical life skills that have stayed with us for almost 50 years. When we came back, we didn't quite fit in any more, as we had become too Guyanese!

We Were Blessed

We left brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers and we have received a hundredfold. God blessed us with more than we could have ever imagined. Here we found brothers and sisters, even a mother and father, but even more we learned to trust and depend on our Heavenly Father in ways not possible had we remained at home. We learned to see the unseen. We saw not a man with no legs, swinging with ropes from the rafters to move around his single room home, but a brother, who moved from anger to understanding the path to which God brought him, leaving behind the life of a dandy to take up the cross of Christ. We saw not just a tall, lanky man in Bro. Peter Hazel who was convinced that bush tea and soft grease (actually candle wax) would coat your lungs if you swallowed it and stop a persistent cough, but a brother who longed for any way to help us learn how to manage because he loved us. His wisdom was beyond book learning, (which he thought was only a handicap for me). He identified the stench of death which filled the house, (it turned out to be a dead donkey in the front yard), and the dusting of bat dung on the stove. When we needed advice, God provided the strong and spiritually wise voice of Bro. Hugo Mitchell, or the gentle kind voice of Bro. Stan Howard. When



Peter Hazel.



Stan Howard.

we thought we lacked something we saw Granny (Sis. Mary James), who shared anything she had with those around, and praised God when He provided the smallest blessing. She confidently dropped her last two quarters into the collection never doubting that God would provide her the fare to get home. God is faithful; a kind sister pressed into Granny's hand a little gift, two quarters. When we longed for the caresses of a mother, God provided one in our beloved sister, Gladys Lord, who was an inspiring example of a true mother in Israel.



Gladys and Granny.

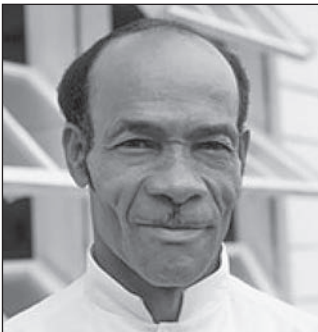
trapped inside), taught me about grass lice, held us through all those tough times of discouragement or distress. We grew up alongside her own 4 children. We saw in her husband, Bro. Kenneth Lord, not just a man who was illiterate, but a brother whose ears held onto the Word of God and who labored all day in the hot sun to earn money for his family when the estate pump was not working. In Bro. Bill Naidu, her brother, who had been strong enough to lift a donkey and get paid for accomplishing the challenge, but later became strong in God's Word, thirsting for whatever sips or gulps he could find. Sheila, Rosita, Millie, Meena, Yvonne were all on the cusp of adulthood along with Bre. Rafeek, Edward, and Clement. In New Amsterdam our midweek Bible class group became our friendship group: Meena, Clive, Christine, Vernon, Dave, Ashraf, and Stan. Then there was Sis. Lynette who

Children and adults alike sat at her feet and found guidance and comfort. She sat at my bedside mopping my fevered brow and feeding me tablespoons of water to rehydrate me. She prepared "building soup" to hasten my recovery, carrying it from home taking the first taxi at 6 am. She cooked for us when she had little, pulled my "nara" (when wind was



Meena.

married a brother (Sash) when she was not yet 15 and skinny as a rail. She fattened up a bit with marriage, so the marriage was deemed good. We welcomed their first child, Debbie. What a blessing!



Vernon.

Our Lives

We both taught at a government secondary school, Ted full-time and me part-time. We earned a Guyanese salary which we lined up on pay day to collect in cash. We lived on a Guyanese salary. It was not too long before we forgot that we were white when everyone else was dark. I remember staring out the window one afternoon as a white lady passed on the road, thinking how much she stood out whilst forgetting we must stand out too.

Medical care in Guyana, and especially in New Amsterdam, was very substandard. There was an outbreak of typhoid fever and a CYC girl contracted it. Our immunization from home had expired, so we had to line up with all the staff and students to receive injection. The nurse used a glass hypodermic and

reused the needle until it became too dull, then she would discard it. I saw contamination and prayed fervently for God to provide a way through this, and as she turned to do my injection the needle was too dull, and I got a fresh needle with Ted right after me. Then there was the time we went caroling before Christmas. It was dark and we went to the homes of brethren in the ecclesia. When we got to Sis. Caldeira's home the solid board windows were closed for the night. Suddenly in the midst of our singing she threw open the window with such an expression of profound joy that we have never forgotten it. Then she spoke and said she'd thought we were angels singing and Jesus had returned. When sis. Ceres came to town on a launch from up the river, she'd bring us Amerindian cassava bread. Delicious! When we travelled to Georgetown once a month to buy a case of canned evaporated milk, Esther would put us up at her house on New Market street, where we always laughed to the point of hysterics listening to her stories told in proper Guyanese and punctuated with appropriate stiups (teeth sucking) which habit has persisted with us to this day!

Our Return

We returned to Guyana in 2000 and felt the shadows of those we loved so dearly, who were now gone, but in the calm smile of Bibi we saw her mother, in the laughter of Seerojnie her aunt. We were home again. Guyana remains our second home, and the love of our brethren there has carried us through many difficult times these last few years. We are certainly thankful for the support of technology enabling us to keep in touch. Over the 17 years we were CBMA links to Guyana, we have had the privilege of being a part of several families there. Dawne's parents, David and Carol Andrews, were married when we lived there and now, we have watched Dawne's daughters grow up. Sis. Abigail is fine young woman of faith and conviction. Dan is a sweet teen. We were in Guyana when Bro. Sankar Rupenarine, Bibi's husband fell asleep; we grieved with Bibi and the 4 children devastated by his death, and were privileged to hear the heartfelt sentiments expressed by so many who were touched by his kindness. We were in Guyana when Sis. Seerojnie Permaul's mother (Sis. Rita Menapen) fell asleep and many family members from Canada came, although there was no water except what was stored in the two tanks. Many of the Eccles brethren (Jerrold, Patrick, Anna Lou, Jenny, etc.), who were teens at Madewini Bible camp, now have their own teenage children. We all grew up and grew old somehow.

Our Gift from God

Living in the mission field, as we did for four years, changed us, forever. We grew together as husband and wife, but even more grew to know God in a way impossible at home. There God gave us a new home and a new family. Those years were full of challenges and hardships; many were more emotional than physical. It is the joy and pain of loving that gives life depth, the pathos and depth of relationships that bind us forever. There we could shed the trappings of material things to find brethren, our brethren, our gift from God.

Dolores Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Revitalized Under God's Amazing Hand!

In 2016, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) asked a Tanzanian family where they wished to relocate. The family was Christadelphian and their answer was "Canada." Meanwhile in London, Ontario, the ecclesia had long since seen the last of its children grow up. They were in the middle of a seven-year Sunday school drought with little prospect of change any time soon. But God has dealt with seven-year droughts before.

Quite unknown to the brothers and sisters of the London ecclesia, the family from Tanzania had a married daughter living in London with her husband and children. Things were about to change. In June 2018, the family left St. John's and moved to London. God works in mysterious ways and directs everything according to His plan, even when we are not aware of the whys and wherefores. Overnight, the London ecclesia gained a new brother and sister in Christ, and two additional adults started attending the meeting as well.

More than this. The Sunday school sprang to life again under the amazing hand of God. It suddenly had seven children, including two girls from the married daughter's family! And Sis. Louise Birchall was teaching Sunday school again.

Bwana ni mfalme juu ya dunia yote

What a blessing, and what a challenge! When was the last time you taught Sunday School in Swahili ... or even a little bit in Swahili? Google Translate to the rescue! Sis. Louise describes it this way. "I just googled 'The Lord is King over all the earth' and asked for the words in Swahili. I then typed both versions on the poster that the children were working on."

English: The Lord is King over all the earth.

Swahili: Bwana ni mfalme juu ya dunia yote.

She continues: "I do the same thing with other projects as well so they will better understand scripture in their native language. Every week I put corresponding Swahili and English words in random locations on the classroom board. I ask them to match the words with (pieces of) string. When this is done, I read the words to them in a Bible verse.

"At other times I ask them to translate Swahili words into English. This confirms my Google translation and lets them hear the words and better understand the lesson in English. Also, if they do their homework or projects in English, I give them bonus points.

"Recently we had a lesson on 'Let your light so shine.' Because they had been in Newfoundland for two years, I brought a lighthouse miniature to class and used it to talk about ships coming into harbor, being guided by the light. We translated the verse *'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). They did the project in English and I did it in Swahili. We put the results side by side on the board. Then we sang the Bible song, 'Let your light so shine.' The children and I are learning together!"

And their enthusiasm is refreshing. The ability to wonder and rejoice at simple things is a blessing too easily lost in our western world of plenty. The children were tickled the first time their Sunday School projects were bound together in a book. What a talented teacher to do this for them!

The hand of God again!

Many readers will know that the London Ontario Ecclesia is home to the Christadelphian Save the Children Fund, and Bro. David and Sis. Louise Birchall are its directors. A house next door to the ecclesial hall is owned by the ecclesia and has been made into the CSTCF House, the repository for all the Sunday school and Bible learning materials that CSTCF collects and distributes to children in 45 countries.



Asumani and Jeanne with their Sunday school books.

"Shopping" at the house became a common occurrence for Sis. Louise and her new Sunday school students. They were allowed to get clothing, Sunday school supplies, and other needs that were missing in their lives. At one point, the children were shown the kit bags that CSTCF fills with Sunday school supplies and personal items for children everywhere.

Twelve-year-old Sele saw the bags and asked a question: "Aunt Weezie, did you ever give kits to children in Tanzania?"



CSTCF House and typical workday.

“Yes,” was the reply, “Why do you ask?” “I think I got one of the kits,” Sele said. Intrigued, Sis. Louise asked her to describe the kit, and Sele did so, to a tee!

When God moves mountains, we should not be surprised by His power. The London Sunday School has been given a child who once experienced the generosity of CSTCF. Sele now helps sort out supplies that will go to other children. We might be inclined to say, “It’s a small world!” But rather, we are being told that we have a large and amazing God!

It was not long before Sele gave a command to the rest of the Sunday school children: “Other children get these supplies, and we do not need them unless ‘Aunt Weezie’ says so.” “Shopping” became less frequent, and the children gained precious learning: “Is this a need or a want?” And they value what they have. A one-dollar book



Children with kit bags in Guyana.

is precious, a Bible marking kit defines a future objective, a Bible-logo T-shirt is proudly worn to school, and first Bibles are carried around like fine gold. They have also come to understand the meaning of the Lord’s words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Such are the worldwide connections that we have in the brotherhood; one never knows when God will connect the dots for us. The seven-year Sunday school drought has come to an end in London and further growth is anticipated. God willing, another Christadelphian family will be relocating to London soon: two adults with three additional children will attend the revitalized Sunday school.

As all of this unfolds, adjustments are an ongoing reality. At the beginning, all of the children were together in one class. This was more comfortable for everyone while social challenges and a language barrier dominated their needs. But trust has grown and relationships have had time to develop. This year, the two older children have their own Sunday school class, taught by Sis. Audrey Winter. Sis. Louise continues to teach the younger ones.

God is opening doors, and the ecclesia is embracing it. To be sure, sacrifices have to be made and learning experiences have to be worked through. But the privilege of sharing fellowship with the newly arrived brothers, sisters, and children, and the opportunity to grow together in our common faith, is an exciting adventure for everyone. The entire ecclesia is rejuvenated.

God is at work everywhere in the brotherhood. Please consider telling us about your CYC as well. Contact Jim Harper at sundayschool@tidings.org.

Louise Birchall (London, ON) and James Harper (Meriden, CT)

Sisters at War

Introduction

We have been presenting articles on Military Service in North America, and dealing almost exclusively with the experiences, privations, and suffering experienced by brethren. In the UK, during WW2, sisters were required to register and then directed into employment as chosen by the government, although not into the armed forces.¹ Some were directed into Civil Defense work, such as firefighting, which for many, especially in the Berean and Dawn communities, was not advised. Much turmoil resulted, particularly when some Christadelphians took a rigid stand against any involvement with the civil authorities. Fortunately, the authorities took a tolerant view, and all concerned were allowed to perform their fire watching duties, onerous though they were, under voluntary service.

In North America, there was no attempt to direct the sisters to perform any particular work, although they were subjected to a great deal of propaganda to contribute to the war effort. “Rosie the Riveter” still echoes to some! However, some suffered much, particularly in the United States, because the government did not provide for the support of conscientious objectors, even those with families.

The United States

To quote from Sibley² (modified for Context):

“(Congressional inaction on supplying funds for Conscientious Objectors’ (CO’s) payment) produced a train of serious consequences not only for the individuals involved but for the entire Civilian Public Service (CPS) program. Over one-third of the men in CPS after 1943 had one or more dependents in need. Some of these persons were in desperate straits. The wife of one man deserted their two children, leaving him to find the means of caring for them. The mother of another assignee, afflicted with bad varicose veins and fainting spells, was utterly incapable of self-support; shortly after his induction, she was evicted from her apartment for nonpayment of rent.”

There were about 140 Christadelphian members in CPS camps during WW2, and many were so confined for several years: the average was just over 2 1/2 years, with some over 4. And there were three groups involved, of roughly equal size: Central (Amended), Unamended, and Berean. However, the sisters involved seemed to have fully cooperated between the three communities.

Although the Christadelphian community stood ready to raise the required \$35 per month to fund the men in camp, there was no initial community support for their families. This caused the first reaction in November of 1942 to be:

“The other question — the one of dependents — was referred to in a number of letters. The most usual suggestion was one which was felt is really quite sensible. Every case of dependency is different. A brother leaves a wife; she may find work. A boy leaves a mother; the mother may have other relatives. There are no two cases alike. As was expressed in the letters, it is felt that each of need is a local problem and one which should be treated in that way. It was expressed that dependents of men called to CPS Camps should first be the obligation of the dependent’s family. In the second place, it is felt that if aid beyond that which the family could render was needed, it was a case for the ecclesia to which the absent brother belonged. If support beyond this was needed, it was felt that assistance might be solicited from nearby ecclesias where the surroundings and circumstances were known. Only as a last resort, was it felt that a ease of this kind should be mentioned to this committee for more general attention.

“Wherever we go or whichever way we look, we find those who are borne down with trial and grief. It is our hope that whatever we may do that we may all try, as far as possible, to lighten the burdens of those who need our help.” (Bulletin #41, Nov 20 1943.)

Subsequently, it was clear that this was not working in every case, so in April of 1944 the following was decided:

“If the family, or the ecclesia, or the general area in which the brother resides, is unable to take care of the brother’s dependency obligations, we are suggesting help as long as contributions permit, to the extent of fifty dollars per month in the case of a wife not gainfully employed, plus ten dollars each for children that are dependent and an additional fifteen dollars for a dependent parent living in the household.” (Bulletin # 48, April 28 1944).

This compares with a private’s pay for a family of a wife and two children of about \$160 per month (about \$2300 today).

In the very nature of things, few stories and accounts have been passed down to me of the personal struggles of the wives. I know many brethren were married when drafted, and many more got married while in CPS camps. In most cases, the wife relocated close to where her husband was, often across the country. For example, we cite the case of Dick Waite, of the Meriden (Central) ecclesia.

Dick Waite

The case of Dick was brought to the attention of CPS authorities, and it indicates their detailed involvement and willingness to listen to issues that must have appeared strange to them. This is from a letter from the Glendora camp to the organization in charge of the camp, the Friends service committee in Philadelphia. (Edited for spelling and clarity).

“It appears that the Christadelphian Church has three separate types of Ecclesias - the Birmingham Amended, the Berean, and the Advocate;

all three men (Andrew Waite, Leroy Butterfield, Dick Waite) belong to the Birmingham Amended Ecclesia. All the five Ecclesias in Southern California are either Berean or Advocate; none are Birmingham Amended. A member of the Birmingham Amended ecclesia is not allowed to join in fellowship with one of the other types of Ecclesia, that is, to break bread, etc. Near Big Flats is located a Birmingham Amended Ecclesia. That is why they want to transfer to Big Flats.

“Dick Waite’s path is a little different, although his religious reasons for desiring transfer are the same. Dick came via Big Flats, NY. After Dick arrived in Glendora CA he went back east on furlough and was married. His wife came back with him. Since being in sunny, healthy California she has been continually sick with numerous ailments, including tonsillitis. Because of this sickness of his wife and the religious reason mentioned above, Dick is very anxious to transfer back to Big Flats. The religious situation and his wife’s illness have upset him considerably.” (CPS correspondence, May 7 1945.)

According to CPS records, he was transferred back to the East coast, but not to Big Flats, but to Pinehurst, NC to take part in pneumonia experiments.

Camp Magnolia, Arkansas

This Brethren CPS camp, about 75 north-west of Shreveport, LA, had at least nine Christadelphians present at one time. According to the camp history, many of the camp members were married, and most wives lived in the town. Among these were probably Amy (Van) Copeland and Dortha (Noel) Canaday.

We are also told that Shelby Lenox was married, but his wife lived with her grandmother in Judsonia, about 200 miles away.³

Christadelphian Ladies’ Auxiliary

I can do best by quoting a summary article in *The Christadelphian Herald*:⁴

“During the war years a service of great benefit was rendered by the Christadelphian Ladies’ Auxiliary to the young men assigned to CPS camps and other work of national importance. A stupendous work has been done — over 4,000 items of clothing, food, etc., have been sent and each brother was remembered on his birthday and at Christmas. The members of the Committee are: Sister Edith Morgan, Secretary; Sister Mabel F. Mowry, Treasurer; Sister Justine Lindquest; and Sister Kathleen Rundle. Great credit is due these sisters, and the boys who were recipients of the packages will long remember



Shelby and Bernadine Lenox.

the comfort and encouragement which has been rendered in this way in their long, tedious, monotonous stay in camp. In addition to the boxes sent periodically, requests for specific pieces of clothing were received. These requests were filled as far as possible. Much Christadelphian literature was donated to the Committee and went along as packages were mailed. This Committee has been working in cooperation with the Southern California Christadelphian Camp Auxiliary: Sister G. F. Aue, Secretary; Sister L. H. Norwood, Assistant Secretary; and Sister E. Walton, Treas. The California Committee has taken over this work for the western camps. Their work also will be long remembered with affection and gratitude by the young men in the camps cared for by them. Another group of sisters gave their time and services to help several Newark, N.J. hospitals who were in need of garments and supplies during the war. During two years of spare time sewing they made 9,480 articles such as baby blankets, doctors' hats, bottle covers, binders, pillow cases, etc., etc. Sister Caroline Fuerth and her helpers have received grateful thanks from the hospitals for their generous help in time of need."

In total, about \$4,000 in 1944 Dollars (about \$60,000 today) was expended on these activities, remembering the COs were only given \$2.50 per month for all their needs, including clothing. The volume of items sent was immense: here is a typical birthday box:

1 work or dress shirt, 1 box stationery, 1 book of 3c stamps, 1 Reader's Digest, 3 pairs of hose, 1 tooth brush, 1 tooth paste, handkerchiefs, 1 lb. chocolates, 1 lb. salted peanuts, 2 pkgs. Dates, Christadelphian literature (old and new), greeting card.

Canada

We know several of the brethren, out of about 72 who were conscripted, were married at the time, but at least a few of those with dependents were exempted. However, we also know of many who got married during their service. The situation in Canada was not as dire as in the United States, for those in camp received \$15 per month from the government. In addition, the restrictions on the men in the camp were, in general, quite loose. Weekends seemed to have been free, in general, the only problem being that the camps were located in very remote areas, quite deliberately away from local habitation. Thus, there appeared to have been little opportunity for the wives to obtain employment locally. Ingenuity could overcome this problem, however, as we shall see.

So let us give accounts of two couples.

Harold and Betty Ashley, BC

Two accounts of this couple's marriage and subsequent weekends survive: one from the camp newsletter,⁵ the other from information supplied by Bro. Bill Perks. The couple were both from Toronto, Harold was in Camp in Shawnigan Lake, (Kokislaw) about 40 miles north of Victoria, BC.

The “hobby” of Harold was recorded in the newsletter as “Betty”, and there is a humorous “fairy tale”, in part:

“Every night at seven or eight Harold sat down and wrote a long, long letter. In a city far, far away lived a girl named Betty. Betty worked hard in an office every day, but every night she went home and wrote a long, long letter. So, every day Harold got a letter in the little letter box on the door of his house... One day a letter came for Betty, which said, ‘I’m running out of stamps, paper, ink, and envelopes. Moreover, my pen is broken. You had better come here and then I will not have to write any more letters. Now every night Harold was heard pounding away with nails and hammer, and soon a neat little cabin was built.’”

“Then one day Harold was off to Vancouver with his best trousers cleaned and pressed. And so they were married and are living as happily as can be expected under prevailing conditions.”

So in 1943 Harold and Betty married, and Betty stayed in the cabin for six weeks, and afterwards almost every weekend, made the trek from Victoria.

Margaret and Ted Farrar, Banff

Margaret and Ted became acquainted in Hamilton, ON, when her mother, Sis. Sarah Bigger, took her children to Sunday school. In 1940, her husband died, and Sis. Bigger moved back to Portland. Meanwhile, Ted was subjected to conscription, and sent to an alternative service camp near Banff, AB. Distance was apparently no object, and Ted and Margaret took the opportunity of Ted having a brief leave to get married in Banff on Sept 6, 1943. After a brief honeymoon in the beautiful area, Margaret went back to Portland until they were reunited in Hamilton when Ted was discharged in 1944.



Ted and Margaret Farrar.

Conclusion

Brethren were not the only Christadelphians who suffered much during WW2. Their spouses and dependents also suffered, and many lives were put on hold. However, the community came together to help as much as they could, in manifold ways, both monetarily, offering hospitality and giving encouragement.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. See details in “*The Captive Conscience*” by John Botten
2. “*Conscription Of Conscience*”, By Mulford Q. Sibley And Philip E. Jacob
3. *The Advocate*, 1943, p. 149 (Under Little Rock, AR)
4. *The Christadelphian Herald*, June 1946 p. 16
5. *The Beacon*, August 1943 p. 6

Infertility (Part 1)

Trials are often specific and unique to each individual, but they teach general and universal lessons. This is the case with infertility. It is experienced by few, but the larger lessons are common to most. This first article of two will quickly define infertility; delve into its emotional, physical, social, and spiritual effects; explore barrenness in the scriptures; and provide suggestions for coping. Part 2, next month, God willing, will offer both caution and advice to friends and family; and then outline the larger, general, universal lessons inherent in the trials of infertility.



The definition

Infertility is usually diagnosed after an inability to conceive, either within 12 months or after a series of miscarriages. It affects about 10% of the population in the United States. About one-third of infertility cases are caused by women's health problems. Another one third of fertility problems are due to the male partner. The other cases are caused by a mixture of male and female problems or by unknown problems, per the US Department of Health and Human Services.

That is the technical definition. The trial itself can better be understood in metaphor. It is like months of unemployment, watching friends receive job offers when you cannot even get an interview. It is like climbing to the top of a ski hill, skis in hand, while others take the chairlift. It is like attending months of private funerals. It is like a magical door that opens for everyone else but locks whenever you approach. It is like a broken red light that never turns green. It is as if a pause button has been pressed on your life, and all your plans are indefinitely on hold.

The effects

The effects of infertility are varied and more pervasive than most would expect. Emotions are affected. Disappointment, grief, mild fear, an unsettled discontent, the sharp longing of hope deferred, and an underlying sadness all become familiar companions, as do regret and, unfortunately, even jealousy. A study of 338 women found that depression peaks after 2 to 3 years of trying to conceive.¹ Previously benign things like diaper aisles, birth announcements, Mother's Day, and playgrounds make it difficult to hold on to a sense of peace.

Infertility also has physical effects. This trial is very corporeal: it occurs in the body. Since one cannot exist apart from the body, there is no way to take a break or temporarily remove oneself from the trial. The body is either pregnant or not pregnant, ovulating or not ovulating, carrying or miscarrying, menstruating or

not menstruating. The monthly cycles continue; the experience of emptiness is tangible; there is no reprieve. If couples seek medical help, there are invasive diagnostic tests and interventions. The body, formerly an ally, begins to feel like a possible foe.

There are always social effects. Social invitations can feel burdensome, especially if depression sets in, and couples might avoid social functions, especially if babies or children are present. Gatherings and Bible schools develop an unwelcome edge, becoming regular reminders that mark the passing of yet another childless month or year. Close friendships can suffer, too. Many friends are also new parents. Even when new parents try not to talk about their babies, they still end up inadvertently talking about their new schedules. These diverging life paths can make the childless couple feel left behind, even when they are happy for their friends with babies. The most intimate social relationship, the marriage itself, is also affected. The trial can create conflict: husbands and wives differ in their hopes, expectations, and methods of coping. It introduces feelings of scarcity and absence into a formerly fulfilling relationship. Marriage is always more difficult when one person feels sad or discouraged; it is especially difficult when both people are feeling this way for an extended period of time. Each person needs extra support, but each person is depleted.

The spiritual effects are deceptively deep. At its essence, the trial of infertility is actually a trial of control, or lack of control. The mind is never pleased to encounter its own limitations. In this way the trial is universal and the deepest solution comes in the form of seven well-known words: "Not my will but thine be done." But like any other time we face our limitations, and it takes a monumental effort to shift the mind towards acceptance. On the way, we might explore previously unknown territory as doubts begin to undermine one's faith: doubting God's character and doubting His love. The first creeps in slowly, usually on the heels of questions about fairness. Is God really good? Can we really trust that He is who He says He is? The second doubt moves in as one feels more and more forgotten. Does He really love me? If this weren't enough, the mind adds jealousy, discontent, coveting, grumbling, envying, anger, and sometimes despair. Like Naomi, one can begin to feel like the very embodiment of bitterness: "Call me Mara." There is no getting around it: hope deferred really does make the heart sick.

The scriptures

What do the scriptures teach us?

Longing for children is natural and therefore permitted. *"There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, 'Enough!': the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, 'Enough!'"* (Prov 30:15-16).

Do we expect the earth to reject water? Do we expect fire to ignore wood? Do we expect people to stop dying? No, we do not. Do we ever wish that a friend or family member would dampen their uncomfortably strong desire for children? Yes, I think sometimes we do.

Childlessness can be accompanied by a confusing sense of shame, even in a modern culture where a woman's worth is no longer tied to childbearing. When Rachel gave birth to Joseph, she said, "God has taken away my disgrace among women" (Gen 30:23). Similarly, Elizabeth, when pregnant with John the Baptist, said, "The Lord has done this for me. In these days He has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people" (Luke 1:25).

It is normal to feel low and distraught, poor and needy. Consider Hannah: in bitterness of soul she wept much. (1Sam:1:10) Consider this parallel construction in the Psalms, likening barrenness to poverty:

*"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.
He settles the barren woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.
Praise the LORD" (Psa 113:7-9).*

Feeling low is to be expected under these circumstances.



Infertility was common in faithful families, particularly in the family of Abraham, the man who was promised innumerable descendants. Sarai was barren; she had no children (Gen 11:30), until Isaac was born in their old age (Gen 21:1-2). And what about Isaac? He married Rebekah when he was forty years old (Gen 25:20). These inheritors of the promises struggled, too, waiting twenty years before their family line continued. "Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant" (Gen 25:21). Isaac was sixty when the twins were born (Gen 25:26). Then there was Rachel: eventually, after a few too many impatient years, she had a child (Gen 30:1,2,22). And long after that, Elizabeth and Zechariah, righteous and blameless, barren and particularly old, finally had a child: John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-7).

Infertility creates conflict. We see intense conflict between Sarai and Hagar, and then between Sarai and Abraham (Gen 16:4-6). Rachel's story is fraught with conflict. She was so jealous of her sister that she demanded of Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!". Jacob became angry at her, saying, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?" (Gen 30:1,2). They were not exactly the picture of domestic tranquility. Hannah also had complex troubles.

Peninnah provoked her, and according to Strong's, violently agitated her, somewhat like a roaring thunder (1Sam 1:6). In addition to this tumult, Hannah's sorrow seems to disappoint Elkanah. The trial was affecting him, making him wonder why she could not be content with him: "*Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?*" (1Sam 1:8).

Responses to infertility seems extreme. Hannah, greatly distressed and weeping bitterly, was praying to the LORD about her misery and affliction (1Sam 1:10). Eli, the outside observer, perceived drunkenness and accused her of having too much wine (1Sam 1:14). Her great anguish and grief and her intense prayer (1Sam 1:16) looked a little extreme from the outside.

Sometimes people need extra support. Elkanah was a wise husband. He gave Hannah a double portion of meat at the yearly sacrifice at Shiloh (1Sam 1:5), but this did not solve all of their problems, although it probably did help a bit. Wives dealing with infertility seem to benefit from a double portion of support, comfort, and love.

Ultimately, infertility illustrates God's ability to create something from nothing. The contrast between prolonged barrenness and an eventual birth emphasizes the miracle of that birth, just as darkness sets the stage for the miracle of light. Prolonged infertility forces a person into Abraham's mindset: it makes you hope against all hope (Rom 4:18). The earth, in its beginning, was formless and void. Formless and void refer to an emptiness, a vacuity, an undistinguishable ruin, a desolation. This is what infertility can feel like. The task is to believe that the Spirit of God hovers over that particular darkness.

Suggestions for the couple

Here is a list of different ways to cope with this trial. Some of these might be helpful right away, and others might become useful later on. These strategies won't remove the trial, but they might make the days more bearable.

- Talk to someone, if you find this helpful.
- Admit that this trial is very difficult. Sometimes we cause more stress by wishing that we weren't stressed. Let yourself admit the sadness inherent in this trial. You don't have to pretend that it is easy.
- Forgive everyone for insensitive comments or advice. People do care about you, and they are just trying to help.
- Provide extra care to one another during particularly difficult times, especially holidays, anniversaries, and after receiving news of pregnancies and births. Follow the example of Elkanah who gave Hannah a double portion.
- Focus on God and His word. Do not turn away. Read your Bible and seek out stories about other faithful individuals who suffered. You will find that you are not alone in your grief or your infertility.
- Distract yourself. Sometimes it is helpful to completely distract yourself, especially if your mind is constantly returning to thoughts of childlessness.

Start a project, exercise, read, spend time with others, or anything else that works, and try to keep your mind focused on the activity.

- Minimize the effects of stress, not in order to conceive, but in order to cope. Infertility can keep you in a constant state of fight or flight, accompanied by adrenaline and worry. Deep breathing, the type associated with yoga or meditation can reduce the physical effects of stress and help to quiet the mind.
- Look to inspiring believers who have faithfully weathered difficult trials.
- Pray. Pray for children, but pray that God, in His goodness, will keep your heart soft (not hard) and sweet (not bitter) while you wait. Pray that He will turn your heart and mind more fully towards Him and give you peace that passes understanding as you endure this trial.
- Hide yourself in the shadow of His wings. Remind yourself that God is with you, wanting to comfort and guide you, every second of every minute of every hour of every day.
- Pray for others. This will remind you that you are not alone in your suffering.
- Pray for children and parents, especially those who bring you the most sadness or jealousy. Pray that the parents will have the wisdom and patience to raise their children well and to teach them about our Lord. Pray that the children will turn their hearts towards God and seek Him with all their heart.
- Think of blessings. Find ways to be thankful for all the blessings that we take for granted.
- Use humor to cope, if you can muster the energy.
- Minimize difficult activities. Yes, it is okay to avoid those social situations that make you feel horrible. You don't have to go to the zoo at Easter when it is packed with children. It is okay to arrive late and leave early at functions with families and children.
- Avoid superstitious thoughts. When we lose control over something, it's tempting to make sense of the loss by coming up with multiple causes. This is common during infertility. Picking out a baby name or browsing through maternity clothes does not cause infertility.
- Learn more and seek support from those who understand. Check out www.resolve.org, an organization devoted to helping people with infertility. I found these two books helpful: *Conquering Infertility*: Domar and Kelly, already cited, and *Empty Womb, Aching Heart: Hope and help for those struggling with infertility* by Marlo Schalesky.

Corina Midgett (Arlington, VA)

(to be continued)

Notes:

1. *Conquering Infertility*: Dr. Alice Domar's Mind/Body Guide to Enhancing Fertility and Coping with Infertility, By Alice D. Domar and Alice Lesch Kelly

Dare to be a Phoebe

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant (diakonos) of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper (prostatis) of many, and of myself as well” (Rom 16:1-2 NASB).

Our challenge

While not quite as alliterative as the old-timey Sunday School hymn, “*Dare to be a Daniel*,” the title of this article, challenges all sisters, you and me, to a high standard of active faith! Paul’s description of Phoebe yields some remarkable lessons. So, let’s dig in to understand in depth what Paul is saying about this exceptional sister.

Phoebe resided in Cenchrea, a port city near Corinth, where it appears there was an Ecclesia as well. Her name means “radiant, shining one” and is associated in Greek mythology with the goddess of the moon. She most likely met Paul when he was stationed in Corinth. As we read in Acts 18:18, it was here that Paul took a vow and shaved his head. Paul alluded to having had a health problem, and it may have been Phoebe who nursed him back to health in her home. At the end of his Corinthian stay, he sailed from Cenchrea to go to Ephesus.

It’s usually assumed that she was chosen by Paul to deliver the letter to the Romans. She most likely had business dealings in Rome. The brethren there were asked to assist her in any manner they could. This unnamed business may even have been in the Emperor’s household, where it is known there were believers (Phil 4:22). In any event, Paul grabbed the opportunity for her to be his courier. This was no small responsibility: She was not just to drop the letter off, but was most likely asked to read it to the Roman Ecclesia, maybe on several occasions. She would have had to be prepared to answer questions about Paul’s writings, and she may have also had a personal verbal message from Paul. Here is an example of Tychicus and Onesimus fulfilling these same duties:

“As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here” (Col 4:7-9 NASB).

An early Christian writer, Clemens, described the qualifications of a letter carrier: “... who from youth to old age have lived blameless lives among us, who will be a trustworthy witness between you and me.” So at the very least, she must have been an educated woman and conversant with the Truth.

Paul and Phoebe

Phoebe is described as a sister. Beyond showing she was a baptized believer, Paul's use of the possessive "our" suggests a family relationship. Anthropologists call this "fictive kinship," where individuals are regarded as family even though they are not actually related by blood or marriage. It is "chosen kin," an emotional connection rather than blood connection. We strengthen the bonds of our own community in this way by regarding all baptized members as part of the family. It's carried further by our custom of having our children call the brothers and sisters, aunt and uncle. This is the closeness that Paul felt for Phoebe.

Furthermore, Paul urged that she be treated in a "manner worthy of the saints." The word saints, "*hagios*," as used in the Bible, describes followers of Christ, not a special class of extra-holy miracle-doers. We sometimes avoid calling ourselves saints, because of how other churches distort this concept. But the New Testament writers use this term quite often. The believers in Rome were to treat Phoebe as worthy of honor and with hospitality. They were saints, and she was one too.

Deacon

There has been much ink spent on the question of whether or not Phoebe was a deacon. The Greek is "*diakonos*," a gender-neutral word that is variously translated as "servant," "minister," or "deacon." The context of the term is usually in connection with work serving the brotherhood. Paul is consistent in his use of the word to describe a position of influence, not that of an ordinary servant or slave. He calls himself a "*diakonos*" (Rom 15:25, 1Cor 3:5, Eph 3:7). And he does so for others: Timothy (1Tim 4:6), Epaphras (Col 1:7), Tychicus (Eph 6:21-22), Apollos (1Cor 3:5) and even Jesus (Rom 15:8). However, Phoebe is the only person in the Bible described as being a deacon of a specific Ecclesia, Cenchrea. All these other examples use the word as a general title in the wider Christian community. Was Phoebe's role any less than these men? When English translations call her a "servant," it somehow gives license to diminish the importance of her position, because she was a woman. Commentators assign her solely the womanly roles of nursing the sick and being hospitable. Paul valued her as a co-worker and partner in his mission. She could not have been an ordinary servant.

We traditionally go to 1st Timothy to find more about the formal position of deacon. The passage mostly focuses on character qualifications of deacons but is scant on details of the duties.

"Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women (gynaikas) must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1Tim 3:8-13 NASB)

It's most likely that verse 11 describes women deacons and not deacons' wives. Where the King James Version reads "their wives," scholars generally agree that the better translation of "*gynaikas*" is "women" and note that the word "their" is not in the original Greek. "Wife" and "woman" are both uses of the word, which appears 92 times as "wife" and 129 times as "woman" in the KJV. Verse 11 is unique in that there is no such requirement for Elders in 1Tim 3:1-7. It is reasonable, therefore, to draw the conclusion that verses 8-10 are about male deacons, verse 11 about female deacons, and 12-13 about males again. It can also suggest there were no female elders.

As for duties, deacons are not specifically required to be "able to teach," as are the Elders (1Tim 3:2), but are expected to "*hold the mystery of the faith*" (v. 9). Acts 6:1-6 may be

an early example of the mechanics of appointing deacons to take care of the feeding and welfare of church members. This included making especially sure the Greek widows were receiving a share of the common funds, and given the opportunity to worship. Perhaps another helpful way to think about the position of deacon comes to us from the Old Testament, patterned after the duties of Eleazar, the son of Aaron:

"The responsibility of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light and the fragrant incense and the continual grain offering and the anointing oil — the responsibility of all the tabernacle and of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings" (Num 4:16 NASB).

If in modern worship, the "oil" represents the word of God, the "incense" is symbolic of prayer, the "grain offering" equates with the memorial table and "anointing" suggests holiness, then the responsibilities of a deacon are considerable and encompass all aspects of ecclesial life.

Helper?

There's another interesting Greek word that Paul used to describe Phoebe: "*prostatis*," a female benefactor, patroness, guardian caring for the affairs of others, aiding them with her resources. When translators call her the more mundane word "helper", they again diminish the prestige that Phoebe would have naturally deserved in the Greco-Roman society of the time. It was quite common for a woman of wealth, probably a widow or unmarried, to adopt causes or people and commit her resources to their welfare. Paul called her his patroness. She supported his mission and perhaps, like Stephanas (1Cor 16:15) or Aquila and Prisca (1Cor 16:19) or Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), Phoebe was the host and leader in her home of the Ecclesia in Cenchrea.

Here's a challenge:

**Educate yourself! Educate your girls!
In some circles, higher education is not encouraged for young women. However, education forms thinking minds and develops skills and careers.**

Travel in the first century was dangerous. A woman would not have traveled alone and thus Phoebe must have been able to finance her own servants to accompany her. The source of her wealth may even have been that she owned her own fleet of ships, seeing that she was living in the very active port of Cenchrea. An intriguing suggestion made in a commentary on Romans 16 by Theodoret of Cyrillus (393-460 AD), is that when Paul went on his fourth missionary journey to Spain (Rom 15:23-24), he was accompanied by Phoebe and it was her funds that enabled the trip to happen. This is early church history and not inspired, but it's not out-of-the-question speculation.

There is also evidence that the reputation of Phoebe lived on long after her death. Attesting to her status is a funeral stone on the Mount of Olives with the inscription "Here lies the slave and bride of Christ, Sophia the deacon, the second Phoebe, who fell asleep in peace..." The dating of this is 4th century, but what is interesting is that to be a "Phoebe" had become a "thing," and to be commemorated as such was an honor.

What Happened

What happened then? The description of the worship at the time of Paul allots equal participation to men and women:

"What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up" (1Cor 14:26 NIV).

There is no shortage of examples of influential first century Christian women: Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Lydia, Euodia, Syntyche, Julia, Junia, Eunice, Lois, and the Elect Lady and her sister of 2 John. Paul valued women and he regarded them as partners in his work. While there were women who were active leaders in the early church, it seems that gradually over time the leading positions in the church became exclusively assigned to men. Women were excluded from taking on important roles in the Ecclesia. By the year 1000 AD, deaconesses (note there is now a female word for the job) were relegated to cloisters and nunneries, principally devoted to the role of feeding the poor and caring for the sick. But when the Reformation finally came and the power of the priesthood was broken, and false doctrines rejected, the practice of male hierarchy was not shed and to some extent exists today. Does this still play out in the current Christadelphian infrastructure? In Paul's day, equal numbers of men and women served in similar ministries with similar titles. Is this history that we can continue to ignore?

Her Example

Why should we care about who and what Phoebe was? As we've seen, there are so many lessons sisters can glean from the two short verses in Romans about this associate of the Apostle Paul. While not universal in all places, sisters are often discouraged from taking an active role in the Ecclesia. The roles that are permitted traditionally to women are really important and not to be lightly

dismissed. There is, however, so much more sisters can contribute. When God created Eve out of Adam's side, she was to be a "help meet." This old English phrase has been morphed into "helpmate," not at all the meaning of the original Hebrew: "*ezer kenegdo*." It's a watering down of the role similar to Phoebe's being called a mere "helper." There is no indication of inferiority in its meaning, and the expression is used to describe one who surrounds, protects, and supports the opposite person, a mirror image. Eve is called the "Mother of All Living" because it was through her that man was to be saved, but that's another whole study! So the bottom line is the roles of homemaking, child-rearing, feeding, nursing are not to be denigrated. At the same time, the possibility of expanding to other roles to support and protect family and Ecclesia should be considered. Sisters, let's use the skills and brains that God has given us. Phoebe nursed others and dispensed hospitality. She was also a businesswoman, patron, deacon, courageous traveler, ready to explain the book of Romans. (Something I'm unable to do!)

Here's a challenge: Educate yourself! Educate your girls! In some circles, higher education is not encouraged for young women. However, education forms thinking minds and develops skills and careers. Women are prominent in fields like writer, editor, proofreader, linguist, missionary, graphic artist, accountant, bookkeeper, engineer, architect, interior designer, nurse, teacher, businesswoman, chef, musician, to name only a few. Even if a sister never practices these careers in the workplace, she can support the Ecclesia with these proficiencies in so many areas. Out of fear of usurping a male role, should a sister hold back from contributing to the Ecclesia when she clearly has a talent that's commendable? Why should she be nervous about making a comment or asking a question in Bible class? It's time for us sisters to become intellectually curious and cultivate strong Bible knowledge, not for its own sake but for the edification of our fellow believers.

Let's all make ourselves worthy of emulation by the generation of girls following us. Opportunities abound to display wisdom and courage, to serve in whatever capacity arises. In short, it's up to each of us to become that "radiant shining one," to become a Phoebe!

Melinda Flatley (Pittsburgh, PA)

What a shining disciple Phoebe was! Her home was in Cenchrea, the eastern harbor of the city of Corinth, a busy trade center and a town which was notorious for its evil and sin. Yet it was here that Phoebe lived and where she shone. We are not told where, when or how Phoebe was brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, but she could say, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in my heart, to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Your name might not be Phoebe, but you can be a shining one for Jesus all the same.

- By Joan Kerley in *Women of the Bible*, CMPA

Forgiveness

There are several Hebrew and Greek words translated as “forgive” in the Bible, many with slightly different connotations. In the New Testament, *aphiemi* means “to send forth.” It’s used in the Lord’s Prayer: “*And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*” (Matt¹ 6:12). The sense seems to be that of giving up the right to collect a debt. Another word used in the NT is *charizomai*. Its meaning is “to grant as a favor.” The word *aphesis* means “freedom; pardon.” It is only used of the forgiveness God can give; it is never used of humans. In the Old Testament, *calach* is defined as “to forgive, pardon, spare.” Like *aphesis* in the NT, *calach* is only used of God’s forgiveness. These words all have a slightly different flavor, but the message is the same — when a sin is forgiven, it should be gone and never mentioned again. We give up our right to collect on that sin; we send that sin away.

Hebrew Word *Nasa’* and Implications for Forgiveness

The focus of this article will be the Hebrew word *nasa’*. This word is interesting because it does not mean “forgive” in the way we often think of it. According to Strong’s, it means “to lift, bear up, carry, take,” and it is in that literal sense that we usually find it. It is only translated “forgive” 16 out of over 600 times the word is used. A couple of examples of its more common usage are when “*the water increased and lifted up the ark*” (Gen 7:17), and when God tells the Israelites, “*I bore you on eagles’ wings*” (Exod 19:4). This word has a very visual element to it. Picture believers being borne on the wings of eagles.

How does this concept of lifting or bearing something up fit with forgiveness? We cannot offer each other the kind of forgiveness that directly leads to salvation. We cannot offer each other *calach* forgiveness. What we can do for each other is lift each other’s sins away, by lifting the burden of guilt off the one who committed the sin. We can also symbolically lift the sin up into the heavenly realm, for God to deal with, and let go of our hold on it.

Let’s look at some verses where *nasa’* is translated “forgive.” Consider in each verse who is doing the forgiving, and who is being forgiven.

*“Thus you shall say to Joseph, ‘Please **forgive**, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.’ And now, please **forgive** the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him” (Gen. 50:17).*

*“The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.’ Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have **forgiven** this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num 14:18,19).*

*“Please **forgive** the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days” (1Sam 25:28).*

*“How blessed is he whose transgression is **forgiven**, whose sin is covered!” (Psa 32:1).*

Some of those verses involve God forgiving, but two involve people — Joseph (Gen. 50:17) and David (1 Sam. 25:28). By meditating on how Joseph and David displayed forgiveness, we can glean practical ideas for what it meant to lift sin away in these cases; and receive instruction for our own practice of forgiveness.

Joseph

Joseph’s brothers mocked him, threw him in a pit, and then sold him into slavery. But we know God used Joseph to accomplish His plan. When Joseph finally revealed his identity to his brothers, we see he had already done

the work of forgiveness. The bolded phrases are some of the actions he took or statements he said that demonstrated his forgiveness was already complete.

*“Then Joseph said to his brothers, **‘Please come closer to me.’** And they came closer. And he said, **‘I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to **preserve** for you a remnant in the earth, and to **keep you alive** by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, “Thus says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. **You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished**” ’” (Gen 45:4-11).***

Notice that Joseph didn’t pretend the sin didn’t happen. He says, *“whom you sold into Egypt.”* Lifting someone’s sin away doesn’t mean not acknowledging there has been a breach in the relationship. But we see many phrases that show Joseph displayed kindness to his brothers regardless of their sin.

When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they wondered if Joseph would finally pay them back for the sins they had committed against him.

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the

Though we know ultimate forgiveness and salvation are God’s and Jesus’ to grant, we have been given a part to play

*wrong which we did to him!" So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father charged before he died, saying, "Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.' " And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said to them, '**Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them**' (Gen 50:15-21).*

The moment their father died, the minds of Joseph's brothers went right back to their sin. How often do we hang onto our sins, even when we know God has graciously forgiven and lifted them away, and when those we may have wronged have done the same? The brothers immediately wondered if Joseph had just pretended to forgive him for Jacob's sake, and whether now he would take retribution. He took great care to assure them this was not the case.

David

Now let us consider David. The quote from 1Sam 25:8 was Abigail asking David not to destroy her household because of her husband's actions. We know David responded by eventually making her his wife. But let's look at some examples of David's forgiveness of Saul.

Try to pick out which word in the following passage comes from the word *nasa*. "*Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer*" (1Sam 16:21). The word is "armor bearer." David was a literal armor bearer (one who lifted and carried his armor) to Saul. Can we also see a symbolic "lifting" in the relationship of David and Saul? David lifted Saul's mood by playing his harp when he was down; and he forgave him when he sinned against him.

Saul tried to kill David several times, and David eventually went on the run from him. David wrote several psalms while he was hiding out in a cave, including:

"I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. I pour out my complaint before Him [...] I cried out to You, O LORD; I said, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me'" (Psalm 142:1,5,6).

One way David lifted away Saul's sin was by turning to God to comfort him, instead of dwelling on anger and bitterness. He lifted the sin up to God, and asked God to take the burden off him.

Twice during this time, David had the opportunity to kill Saul. Both times, he refrained. The first time, David cut off the hem of Saul's garment, and immediately regretted it.

“It came about afterward that David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe. So he said to his men, ‘Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD’s anointed.’ David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul” (1Sam 24:5-7).

Lifting our sins

As with Joseph, we see many phrases that demonstrate David’s kindness to Saul, in spite of his sins against him. We know God is the only one who can offer the kind of forgiveness that ultimately leads to salvation. But He offers us the ability to in some way forgive — to lift away sins. This has to do with the way we interact with those who hurt us.

Two other beautiful displays of this concept, though they don’t use the word *nasa*, are Psa 103:12, which says, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”*; and Mic 7:19, which says, *“He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”* We can see the idea of lifting sins here, speaking of God’s forgiveness.

There are also very relevant NT verses that speak about lifting. James 4:10 tells us, *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”* Part of our motivation for lifting away the sins of others, which requires a great deal of humility, is that we know God will eventually exalt those who humble themselves. God tells us to forgive if we want to be forgiven. As we become more spiritually mature, we may forgive because we know it is the right thing to do; but there may also be times when we forgive because we know we must, if we want to be forgiven for our sins. We will examine one more concept related to lifting, and hopefully will see the connection to forgiveness.

“The people spoke against God and Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.’ The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.’ And Moses interceded for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.’ And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived” (Num 21:5-9).

Jesus says to Nicodemus:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:12-16).

The word “standard,” in the first passage, comes from the Hebrew word *nec*. This word is also translated “pole”, “ensign”, and “banner.” It means “something lifted up,” and it’s related to the word *nasa’*. Christ was literally lifted up — first on the cross, and then in exaltation. We look to him to be healed of our sins, in the same way the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent to be healed. Many times when Moses asked God to forgive the people, he used the word *nasa’*. He asked God to lift the sin of the people away from them. In Numbers, God lifted the sin away by having the people look upon something that had been lifted – the serpent. Our sins are also lifted away by looking at someone who has been lifted – Jesus. This is an even more beautiful picture, because Christ’s lifting also included his exaltation. When we forgive each other, it is a direct acknowledgement of Christ’s work as he was lifted up on the cross. No wonder we are forgiven as we forgive; we are imitating Christ in a very small way. We’ve been given the amazing privilege of participating in lifting away sin, which is ultimately only possible if we are all looking to the one who has been lifted up to carry our sins away.

In summary, though we know ultimate forgiveness and salvation are God’s and Jesus’ to grant, we have been given a part to play. We are to lift away the sins of others by following in the footsteps of Joseph and David, among others. Like we read of Joseph, we do not ask our brethren to carry around guilt after they have been forgiven. We recognize that God is in control, we keep our brothers and sisters close after their sin, and we try to protect them from harm. We make sure they are not afraid — that they know we are not interested in holding their sin over their head or exposing them unnecessarily. We recognize that any vengeance to be carried out is God’s decision, and we know that God can use evil for good. We comfort and speak kindly to them.

Like David, we should be an armor bearer to our brethren (and sisters). We turn to God, as David did in the psalms, and turn our anger and bitterness into praise. We do not stretch out our hand against the LORD’s anointed. We bow and humble ourselves, and lift our brethren up — esteeming them greater than ourselves. We spare our brethren, as David spared Saul, even when it seemed God had delivered him into his hand. Forgiveness doesn’t sound very fair. It’s not. And we should be thankful for that.

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:6-8).

Jessica Miller (Richmond Chapel, VA)

Notes:

1. All scriptures are taken from the NASB unless otherwise specified.

Remembrance: A Return to Central America

It seems a lifetime ago that my wife Sally and I had our first experience of Central America. In one sense it is. When we moved to Panama all those years ago our son, Jacob, was a babe in arms and our daughter, Phoebe, was just about old enough to cling onto the “buggy board” we bought when Jacob usurped her position in the pushchair. Now Jacob is taller than I am and Phoebe has left home.

Guatemala

However, despite the years that have passed, we felt almost at home when we arrived for a brief visit to Guatemala. We'd never, in fact, been to Guatemala before, but Central American countries have things in common that don't appear to have changed. In the airport, we were greeted by the familiar experience of bored immigration officers listlessly stamping our passports; stepping from the airport to be surrounded by helpful taxi drivers dragging our baggage away before we'd even told them our destination; the acidic smell of diesel fumes belching from noisy buses charging up and down the clogged roads; the unexplained holes in concrete pavements; the fact that there always seems to be a dog barking somewhere; and the remarkable difference in the taste of bananas when you eat them in a country in which they grow.

What made us feel most at home, however, was the welcome given to us by the brothers and sisters of the Guatemalan ecclesia. They meet

together in a rented house, the various rooms of which make ideal venues for Sunday school lessons, an office for preparing preaching material, a kitchen and a larger room which serves as the main hall. We were scheduled to deliver five classes over the weekend (a series on the events surrounding and following the return of the Lord), an exhortation, and a public lecture.

Although many of our memories of Central America were bright, one of the key aspects, speaking in Spanish had definitely become a little rusty with time. Waiting for others to arrive, Sally engaged the brethren in friendly conversation but confused “lana” (wool) with “leña” (wood), leaving them bemused by her descriptions of the warm sweaters we wear made of firewood. I'm even more prone to gaffs, so my solution was to write my talks out word for word. I'm fairly sure I made myself understood, but one or two of the brethren asked if I could send my notes to them so that they could review them in their own time. The implication was pretty clear! This small band of brethren are passionate



Visiting the Brethren in Guatemala.

about the Truth and warm in their welcome. This enthusiasm for the faith is infectious and it has certainly infected one young lady, Ruth, the daughter of Brother Jorge Trinidad. At 20, she is the only young person with a serious commitment to the truth in the entire country. Visiting others of her age requires a lengthy, and not-altogether secure, bus journey to El Salvador or Costa Rica. Yet her faith is strong. She clearly enjoys the company of the older brothers and sisters, and with Sister Jean Hunter, is studying diligently, determined to give herself the best possible foundations before her baptism. Of all of the experiences that made us glad to be back, Ruth's quiet questioning of Sally and her keen desire to learn was one of the most welcome.

We hadn't forgotten the familiar sights and smells and sounds of a Central American city. It was familiar to us but very, very different from England. Here in the UK, we don't cough our way along congested roads, and we don't have to tread carefully on the pavements, but we do live in a culture which is either opposed to our values, or being blandly tolerant of difference, fails to see anything of interest in what we preach. Sometimes it does you good to go back to a place you haven't visited for a while. It helps you see what you have, and what you have not forgotten about a strange, foreign country. But perhaps most importantly it reminds you of what is, in "developed" countries, harder to remember: that God is still calling out a people for His name and despite opposition or apathy there are still those who are responding to His call. For those who travel abroad and those who preach to their neighbour, that is something for all of us to remember.

Panama

The irony of our visit to South America is that Guatemala – a country we were visiting for the first time – felt familiar, whereas Panama, where we'd lived for two years, was barely recognisable. The dirty, dingy airport has been replaced by a shining new terminal full of upmarket shops and huge plasma screens advertising the kind of luxury goods that few can afford and even fewer need. The gaudily painted red devil buses have given way to sleek modern coaches, and in the city, a newly constructed metro train whisks people into the centre on overhead rails. The skyline is now crowded with towering apartment blocks. The most remarkable, and for us most welcome change is the construction of a new toll road that crosses the isthmus and links the Pacific city of Panama to the Caribbean city of Colon. This journey used to involve driving the "tranisthmica", a nightmare of a road where trucks, lights off to (supposedly) save fuel, appeared out of the darkness at breakneck speed and where potholes seemed large enough to swallow whole vehicles. Now, a smooth, two lane highway reduces the journey time by half and the journey stress by considerably more.

Much has changed in the ecclesias too. In our time as resident missionaries, it was clear that "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things" had drawn some from the Truth. On the other hand, there are those whose faithful commitment to the truth is remarkable. Perhaps one of the most moving mornings of our visit the breaking of bread service held at the home of Sister Joan. Many members of the ecclesia, plus visitors from

Canada and the USA, travelled out to her house in a rapidly developing suburb called Chorrera. Joan was, for many years, the treasurer of Panama ecclesia; she was, and still is, an example to all of constant, diligent service in all aspects of the life of a disciple. Sadly, she is now housebound, suffering from multiple sclerosis which has robbed her of strength in her legs and is progressively taking the clarity of her speech. Her determination and love for her brothers and sisters is unabated, however, and the delight she took in welcoming brothers and sisters to her home was clear. Breaking bread in unusual circumstances can be poignant, having brethren from vastly different cultures, economic backgrounds, ethnicities and languages all together in a small room brings another level to the words of the Lord



Meeting with the Brethren in Panama City.

about “the communion of the body of Christ” (KJV).

This morning, meeting with Sister Joan taught us something else about memory, too. Panama City ecclesia has had, to be honest, its ups and downs and hasn’t always been a place of refuge for

its members. We’d forgotten that when we left Panama, we’d written each member a card wishing them well and thanking them for their fellowship during our two-year stay. It was, we thought, a tiny gesture. Yet, Sister Joan has kept that card in what she calls her ‘treasure box’ – a reminder to her that she is part of a world wide body of Christ. For those of us blessed to be members of large, active ecclesias, it is easy to forget how important it is for many of our brothers and sisters to be reminded that the body of believers extends throughout the world. The Lord knew the importance of memory, of opportunities to recall our fellowship in him; that’s why he asks us to remember him and our brothers and sisters as often as we can: “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.”

Written by Bro. Steve Jeffries

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

The Gospel Trumps Culture

Each of us are born into a unique culture, largely defined by the history, religion and economy of the land. What seems normal or abnormal, comfortable or uncomfortable, is typically determined by the values surrounding us. In some rare cases, the prevailing culture can reinforce godly principles - usually when the culture has been historically influenced by Scripture and religious practices. In other cases, the norms of our native culture may be a universe away from righteous thinking. Unchecked, our culture becomes the primary driver of daily behaviour and personal interactions.



In Mexico, the emerging ecclesias in Jalisco have been struggling through just these issues. The traditional ways of interacting with others have often been influenced by centuries of governmental and civic corruption and competition for scarce resources and employment. It is typical in Mexican society to assume the worst of someone you meet - wondering what their “agenda” is. Trust is only developed after years of nearly flawless execution

of saying what you’ll do and doing what you say. The Scriptural admonition of preferring another and submitting to each other is not a default in Mexican society.

This is why we are so very gratified by our brothers and sisters in Mexico. Though they too are influenced by these societal norms, they have chosen the “Kingdom culture” over the norms of Mexican culture. It is not an easy road to follow. It exposes one to being taken advantage of and potentially suffering loss. But, increasingly, we see the Spirit of Christ in our members. They eschew gossip and story-telling which is prevalent in society - a way to elevate one’s self above others. They are proactively facing into conflict to resolve issues, before they have festered and threatened unity. They show concern for those in need and reach out to brothers and sisters who have come upon hard spiritual or financial circumstances.

There has been a progressive commitment to the Kingdom culture that we have seen over the past ten years in Mexico. Mexican culture does have some wonderful norms, which include hospitality and open expression of fondness. These are consistent with the Kingdom culture and still remain. The norms that don’t work, however, are being slowly, but surely, diffused. Sound Bible teaching on these matters prevails. Brothers and sisters are accepting ownership for their ecclesias and are committed to making wise spiritual decisions.

It is with great joy that we see this transformation. The Lord works in all our lives to renew and remodel our thinking to be more like his. In Mexico, many of our members have only a few years of association with the Gospel. Yet, their growth is significant. We are so thankful to see the Lord calling out a people for his name in Mexico and to have the privilege to witness their commitment to the mind of Christ. May the Lord continue to bless them and grow their ecclesias.

In the end, the Gospel must always triumph over our culture. In Mexico, the battle is on the way to being won through the strength of our Lord.

Dave Jennings and David Lloyd, CBMA Link Men, Mexico

How I came to be a Christadelphian



Sis. Enid Hall, Port Antonio.

Sister Enid lives in isolation in Port Antonio, Jamaica, where there used to be a thriving ecclesia. As often as possible, brothers and sisters drive up to visit with her and break bread. Her dedication and passion for the truth are evident every time we visit.

In Jamaica, although English is the official language on the island, native Jamaicans also speak what is called “Jamaican Creole.” People often go back and forth between the two, so that grammar is not always “correct” according to what is expected in formal English. You may note this to some degree in the below interview, but I opted not to change the grammar so that I could represent Sister Enid’s words accurately.

Sister Enid, can you tell us about how you came to be baptized, how you came to find the Christadelphians?

Oh, I used to go to the Baptist Church, and then my husband was a politician, strong politician. Never wants to go to any church. He’s not a, what would I say? He’s not a Christian then, we’d call him. But he didn’t want to join any church. But I was born and grown in a Pilgrim Holiness Church, so I attached to that church, and when I got married to him....I also had a Baptist people friend who encourage me and said, “Sister Enid, don’t sit at home at Sundays, come with we to the Baptist church.” I said, “No, Baptist people dress up and I so don’t have the things to dress up to go to the Baptist Church.” [Laughs]

Anyway they worry me until I make up me mind and so I decide to go. After I go though, I enjoy having, but what I find...that when I go to church and...they read, the pastor said out, “Matthew 24 chapter we going a read today, and we gonna read from 1-20.” And we read from one to twenty and then he close off that and then he start to preach another...what they would say, you make up a sermon.

So he didn’t preach based on what they read?

No, He didn’t speak on what we read. And I said, “No, but I want to know what Matthew chapter said, the whole chapter.” So, when I come home I took my Bible and I read from the beginning until the ending, so I get some understanding what Matthew was saying.

Anyway, while I was that way, he [referring to her husband now] noticed that I was sort of different, I wasn’t enjoying his political business, and so I was more taking up in the Bible... One evening I went to prayer meeting and when I come

home, he was there, and he started to take up his Bible and start to read. I went in that same room, because that's our bedroom and I peep out on him, and I say "wait, you gonna read Bible?" [laughs] anyway it goes on for a good time, until one day he said to me, he called me "Tayla" he said to me, "Tayla, I'm going to leave the politics, I'm not going back in politics, I'm going to leave politics, because there is some things they're planning that I don't think I should take part in... and he studied this Bible until he remember nothing about the politics. And he said, "Tayla, I am going out to do some gospel preaching, ...and he goes out for... a few times, until I'm noticing he was serious, so I stop from going to the Baptist Church and join him. And so we have service and service, and people coming in and listen, and we sing and pray and read, and...he's a good lecturer, so you understand. And one day there's a sister...She came up the house and said to me, sister Enid, I join with a little church. Much people don't look at it, but... it's the word of God. They want a place to make an exhibition, and wonder if your husband.... would rent us that hall, that little place down there, for our exhibition. I said... you have to go down there and then you see him...if he will, he will give you. So she go down to him and he decide, "Bible mission. So I'll not rent it but I'll gave him the Bible hall for the week." And so, he came and gave them. One day I sitting in the room there...and I saw two gentlemen coming on this step. And that was Brother Alan and another brother....and then they decide and come another week with a van load of Bibles, and we had that wonderful ... week with the Bible mission... and we had the Bible exhibition during the day, people coming and read, and take out leaflet, and then come in and read and take out leaflet, and they had service at night, they had lecture at night, so we go to the lecture at night, everybody, all that body of people. So, we decide and we told brother Alan... we decide to have the baptism, so we have to have Bible lessons, so we study and study and study until we decide to baptize.

And then you got it?

And then that's the whole way brother Alan could have convinced me that I'm not going to heaven. And all this time I sing and praise the Lord, and... now me not a go no heaven.

Before we finish do you want to say a word of advice for young people today?

Well, yes, for Christ says, "First seek ye the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things will be added." So the first thing that a young person should try to get them-self, not to dress up to go to a church, but to accept Christ's teaching, and to live it. Not only to accept it, because nuff of us not living the teaching. We know what it is but we not doing it. So, we had to do it, sister, we have to try to do it. It hard sometime, you know. Most of what the disciples them go through, it's because them obey... Even the chapter we read today (Acts 5), you hear what they asked? "You think we should obey God more than man?" We need to obey God more than man.

*Interview by Sis. Cassie Giordano, fieldworker in Jamaica
Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works. 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, www.tidings.org

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 online donations. Donations by check should be sent to 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

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, V3R 0J7

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

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Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) helps ecclesias cultivate faith, nurtures faith in youth and creates opportunities for faithful service. c/o Virginia Brierty, PO Box 264, Villas, NJ, 08251-0264 www.wcfoundation.org

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Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. To donate: Acct name: Timothy Charles Galbraith, BSB: 062-692, Acc no.: 1165 7389, Acc type: Netsaver, Bank: Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Address: TC Galbraith, 18 Edna Str., Heathmont, Vic, 3135.

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

News and Notices

Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.
Word files or e-mail in text-only format are preferred.

Please attach Photos wherever possible!

*The ecclesial position primarily in Ontario, and perhaps elsewhere,
is at present confused as unity-related matters are being resolved.
Ecclesial News is published for information purposes only without
endorsement by The Christadelphian Tidings Committee.*

VERDUGO HILLS, CA

We welcome KAYCIE ROBINSON into the family of the Lord, as she was baptized at the Verdugo Hills Hall on August 16, 2019. Sis. Kaycie is the daughter of Bro. Kelly and Sis. Kristi Robinson.



Sis. Kaycie Robinson.

We had lovely fellowship with the following during the past few months: Bro. James Robinson (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); Bro. Peter and Sis. Cheryl Robinson (Hamilton Book Road, ON); and Sis. Millie Robinson (San Francisco Peninsula, CA).

Bro. Nate and Sis. Janee Blanchard have transferred their membership to the Simi Hills, CA Ecclesia. We hope they know that we will miss them and wish God's blessings upon them in their new ecclesial home.

We are sad to report Bro. Richard Corbin died at his home following a stroke. Services were held at Glen Haven Memorial Park in Sylmar on Thursday, September 26, 2019.

- Jeff Ramirez

KITCHENER / WATERLOO, ON

The ecclesia co-sponsored the annual "Adult Study Week", from September 8-13, 2019, which was held in the Shelburne, ON ecclesial hall. Fifteen local brothers and sisters attended this year.

The format for each of the two 75-minute classes was to read the chapter followed by comments from all brothers and sisters attending. The process worked well, revealing some excellent observations. By the end of the week we all had a much greater appreciation of Paul's magnificent epistle to the Romans.

There was free time for recreational activities with daily readings and an evening programme of singing, and enjoying DVD's.

The topic of study followed the one from 2018, when Romans chapter 1 to 5 were considered. In the six days we completed chapters 6 to 8. Any brother or sister

interested in joining us in next year's study week as we continue at Romans chapter 9, is invited to contact the undersigned for details.

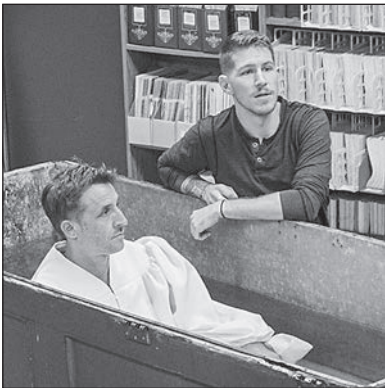
During recent months we have welcomed many visitors and thank those brethren for their service in providing exhortations and Bible classes.

We continue our preaching work at a local adult recreation centre. Bro. Michael Carr leads an Old Testament class and Bro. Andrew Webb leads a New Testament class each on a different day. These classes are typically attended by about six individuals. We pray that this work will bear fruit to the glory of God. There is one visitor who continues to attend our Bible class.

- *Martin J. Webster*

MOORESTOWN, NJ

We have been blessed with the births of three baby girls into our ecclesia. We pray for the Father's blessing on them. Emma Jean Adams was born on November 27, 2018, to Bro. Brian and Sis Rachel Adams. Anastasia May Langston was born on February 11, 2019, to Bro. Dan and Sis. Kim Langston. Nadia Eden McKelvie was born on March 3, 2019, to Bro. Eric and Sis. Sasha McKelvie.



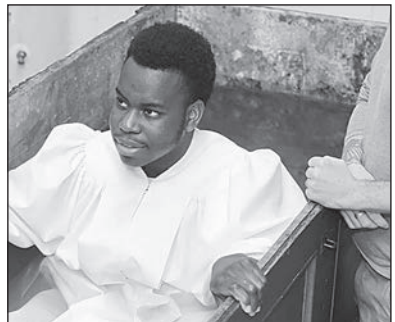
Bro. Tim Buser.

We have also been blessed with three spiritual births. TIM BUSER, the son of Bro. Wayne and Julie Buser, was baptized on April 14, 2019. ISHMAIAH SMALL, the son of Bro. Nigel and Sis. Devonna Small, was baptized on May 12, 2019. JESSICA LAM, the daughter of Bro. Bill and Sis. Pam Lam, was baptized on September 19, 2019. All three have put on the saving Name of Jesus. May our heavenly Father bless them in their walk to His kingdom.

The Moorestown Ecclesia has hosted the following public lectures in recent months: "Marriage: An Outdated Tradition?", given by Bro. Dan Langston; "Did Jesus Really Exist?", given by Bro. Steve Cheetham; and

"Is the Bible Still Relevant?", given by Bro. Eliot Hinds.

The following brothers and sisters have been welcomed around the table of our Lord: Jamin and Bailey Moore (Brant County, ON); Aaron and Kelly Macadams (Worcester, MA); Cornelius Kellet and Deb Kellet (Washington DC); Cody Houghton (Cranston, RI); Jaron and Danielle Joseph (South Ozone Park, NY); Jane Woodward (Sarasota, FL); Kenom Charles (Echo Lake, NJ); Dottie Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI); Samuel Potiah (Cumberland, Adelaide, South Aust.); and Tim Jennings (San Luis Obispo, CA).



Bro. Ishmaiah Small.

Bro. Mark and Sis. Lorraine Spechler have moved to Oklahoma. We will miss seeing them at the ecclesia. May God bless them in their new home. Sis. Sarah Waite, who has previously been a member of our ecclesia has now transferred her membership from the Atlanta, GA Ecclesia back to Moorestown. However, she will be living in isolation in Maine. Sis. Larynette Ndah is also welcomed by transfer to the Moorestown ecclesia. Sis. Larynette was previously a member of the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia and now lives in Delaware. Bro. Innocent and Sis. Joy Baruani transferred to our ecclesia from Nairobi Kenya. They have two young daughters, Elizabeth and Regina. We pray for god's blessing on them. We also welcome by way of transfer, Bro. Nigel and Sis. Devonna Small, Bro. Charles and Sis. Alma Small, Sis. Audry Small and Bro. Isaiah Small, formerly of the Echo Lake, NJ Ecclesia.



Sis. Jessica Lam

- Steve Cheetham



Moorestown Ecclesial Hall.

SUSSEX, NB

A special Thank You to Brother Chris Sales of the Orangeville Ecclesia in Ontario for filling in on short notice at our 2019 Thanksgiving Study Weekend and delivering to us a study on "Exodus - A picture of Redemption".

- Paul Baines

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Send all submissions to tidings.publisher@gmail.com

DECEMBER, 2019

21-27 Ontario Winter Bible School, The Quality Inn & Conference Center, Midland (ON).
Speakers: Peter Owen (Mumbles, UK): "The Last Days"; Tim Badger (Brighton, South Australia): "I Will Be With You – Exhortations from the Book of Joshua"; and Frank Abel (Book Rd, ON): "The Peace of God", and young people, "Where is your Conscience?"
Registration information and other details are available from our website (www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com).

JANUARY, 2020

1 Simi hills, CA NewStart 2020. A Day of Praise and Worship. Join us for a day of Singing, Devotions, Bible Reading and Prayer at the Simi Hills Hall. For further information contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau - jeffgelineau@gmail.com

24-26 Orlando, FL Orlando Winter Study Day. Bro. David Styles, Shelburne, ON. Subject: "Who Is My Neighbor?" For Registration and Hotel information go to website at: www.bit/studyday2020 or for questions email orlandochristadelphians@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY, 2020

23-28 Desert Hot Springs, CA Palm Springs Bible School. Join Bro. Stephen Whitehouse, Hall Green UK and Bro. Duncan Kenzie, Saanich, BC at the Miracle Springs Resort for an uplifting and encouraging week of relaxation, fellowship and Bible study. Register online at: www.californiabibleschool.org or email register@californiabibleschool.org.

APRIL, 2020

11-18 Australian Conference will be held at the Westminster School, Marion, SA, AUS. Theme: "Looking Up, Looking Out, Looking Forward". Our inspiring theme will focus on how we **look up** in faith to the Father, the Son, and the things of the Spirit, how we **look out** for each other and reach into our communities with love, and how we **look forward** to the ongoing journey of discipleship and the hope of a better world. Speakers: Bro. John Launchbury (Portland, USA), Bro. Craig Blewett (Westfield, South Africa) and Bro. Matt Norton (Gosford, Australia). Venue: Westminster School, Marion, SA, Australia Enquiries: Website: www.adelaide2020.com.au. Email: secretary@adelaide2020.com.au. Post: The Secretary, PO Box 559, Brighton, SA, 5048.

JULY, 2020

5-11 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School will be held, God Willing, at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX. The scheduled speakers are: Bro. Mark Giordano, Norfolk, VA - Until Messiah the Prince and the Restoration of Jerusalem; Bro. Stephen Mansfield, Golden Grove, South Australia - Barnabas The Encourager; and Bro. Dev Ramcharan, Toronto, ON - Quicken thou me according to thy word, a Study of Psalm 119. Further information and registration online at swcbs.org. Contact: Dwayne Tunnell - Email: mdt1504@sbcglobal.net

End Note

It Was Just a Teapot

Some might say it was just a teapot. But to me, it was a very special teapot. It was a wedding gift from an uncle and aunt, in the Truth, and it was a genuine English teapot! Being Canadian with Scottish roots, we look upon a proper cup of tea as more than something to drink; it is a ritual.

After 30 years, however, it was broken — an accident and also a very minor “disaster”. Could it even be replaced? A Christadelphian sister from England, and a serious shopper also, told me of a Royal Doulton shop not so far away — the gold standard of English tableware and accessories. Soon an expedition was underway. When we reached the mall, I left my husband George at a bookstore, where I knew from experience that he would be well occupied for an hour or two. The English shop soon revealed its treasures: the finest dishes of all shapes, sizes, colors, patterns and prices. And yes! there was a wealth of fine English teapots, even a familiar pattern, “Old Country Roses”!

I could scarcely wait until we got home, to show our son Adam the great “prize” I had found. Carefully I unpacked the box. Carefully I turned the teapot over to remove all labels and price tags. In a single moment, my joy turned to disappointment. My English teapot had been made in... Indonesia!

A new discovery: after a couple of days of grumbling and muttering, I had my own epiphany: the tea from my Indonesian teapot tasted just like the tea from my aunt’s very English teapot.

As often happens when we encounter setbacks or disappointments, I began to realize that there were spiritual lessons to be had even from the ups and downs of this purchase. The Genesis narrative portrays Adam as created from the dust (clay) of the earth, and molded into a vessel in the image of God.

Archaeologists have demonstrated the importance of potters and pottery in Bible times. For one thing, potters usually practiced their trade on the outskirts of cities, because “firing” the pots created a lot of smoke. The “potter’s field” seemed to have been located outside Jerusalem, near the cemeteries (Matt 27:7,10).

While the most precious vessels were of bronze, silver and gold, the utensils of ordinary life were made of clay. Once finished, clay pots would be used to store fresh water, wine, and various foodstuffs. When first put in use, they would be considered ritually clean, but once they were polluted with dirty water or worse, they would be forever unclean. In a household, clean vessels would hold water for drinking or washing, but would finally be downgraded to unclean vessels. These unclean vessels had their uses too. The host might wash the feet of his visitors with clean water (John 13), but the unclean vessel nearby was for storing the dirty water produced by the washing. Finally, the worst of unclean vessels might serve to store garbage and waste until it could be disposed of. The Apostle Paul often used pots or vessels to illustrate spiritual matters:

“Does not the potter [i.e., the LORD] have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?” (Rom 9:21).

“Each of you should learn to control his own body [vessel in KJV] in a way that is holy and honorable” (1Thes 4:4).

Indeed, Saul/Paul was himself called “a chosen vessel” by our Lord (Acts 9:15). In Paul’s gospel, however, even an unclean “vessel” or person could be forgiven through Christ — “cleansed” (NIV) or “purged” (KJV) — so as to become a “vessel” for honor or noble purposes (2Tim 2:21). Paul says that, if we control the lusts of our bodies and minds, while following holy things, then the most corrupt vessels can yet serve God’s purpose. Those “vessels” whom He has forgiven (the “vessels of mercy”: Rom 9:23, KJV) will be the only “vessels” to be found in His Kingdom (Zech 14:20,21).

Clay pots also served to preserve important papers from heat and moisture, as the Dead Sea scrolls in Qumran. The LORD ordered Jeremiah to preserve his land deed in such a vessel (Jer 32:14), as a token of God’s eternal promises. In faith and hope, we hold these same promises in our own vessels of clay — what Paul calls “this treasure in jars of clay” (2Cor 4:7). But those who remain in a state of uncleanness will be the “vessels” who will be broken, irretrievably, in the last judgment (Psa 2:9; Rev 2:27; Isa 41:25; Jer 18:6).

Then it came to me. Just as the teapot from Indonesia was every bit as good as the teapot from England, so every “vessel” of God’s making is not to be judged by its origin, but by its contents. When the psalmist spoke of those who were born in Babylon, Philistia and Ethiopia as having equal standing with those who were literally born in Zion (Psa 87:4-7), he was making this point. Where we are literally born is not nearly so important as where we are spiritually born!

Now I know that an English teapot has no claim to priority over one made anywhere else. The difference is in the kind of tea put inside! No matter whether you and I were born in Scotland or Canada or South Africa, the only thing that really matters is — what kind of “treasure” do we hold in our vessels? If it is the right treasure — the glorious promises of God’s Kingdom, and the “*unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Eph 3:8) — then we have the greatest wealth the world could ever imagine, and we will be priceless vessels who belong to the Father and the Son forever. And we will be His when He makes up His “treasured possessions” (Mal 3:17).

Does your birthplace really matter,

Palace, cottage, mansion, slum,

Into robes of righteousness.

There’s a birth we can rely on,

Born in Christ our Lord anew.

Choose your birthplace — make it Zion!

Endless life ‘twill bring to you.

– N.P. Holt (From The Testimony, August 1971)

Barbara Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

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Those Who Wrote

Few brothers and sisters realize that sisters have been writing for the magazines in our community since their beginnings.

*In 1838, Louisa Anderson wrote one of the most significant letters penned by anyone:
Look up the “Lunenberg Letter!”*

Eusebia Lasis, daughter of John Thomas and Jane (Norrie) Roberts, wife of Robert Roberts, were both prolific authors.



Eusebia Lasis



Jane Roberts