

TIDINGS

EDITORIAL

THIS DECADE

EXHORTATION

Uriah the Hittite

REFLECTION

Disconnecting From the Faith

REFLECTION

The Faith That Conquers (Part 4)

ALSO...

- Bible Study: All the Children of God Have Names (Part 10)
- Joy of Sunday Schooling: The Commandments of Christ
- History: Conscientious Objection (Part 11)



COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY:

SIS. KRISTEN STYLES (THOUSAND OAKS, CA)

Location: Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

“The 2019 superbloom of the California poppies was simply breathtaking to experience. In the midst of our busy lives, it can be so refreshing to set aside moments like this to truly appreciate the beauty of God’s creation.”

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

is published monthly, except bimonthly in July-August, by The Christadelphian Tidings, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941. FIRST CLASS POSTAGE PAID at Austin, Texas and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Christadelphian Tidings, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee:

Joe Hill (Chairman), John Bilello, Peter Bilello, Randy Davenport, Clive Drepaul, Kevin Flatley, Jeff Gelineau, Duncan Kenzie, William Link, Alan Markwith, Ted Sleeper, and Ken Sommerville.

Christadelphian Tidings Editorial Committee:

Peter Hemingray (Editor), David Jennings (Associate Editor), Section Editors: Duncan Kenzie (First Principles), Jim Harper (Sunday School), John Bilello (Letters to the Editor), Steve Cheetham (Contributing Editor), Jan Berneau (Bible Mission News), Lori Cusenza (News and Notices), Jeff Gelineau (Subscriptions, Finance, Coming Events, and Layout). Book Editor: Ethel Archard.

Subscriptions: The Brothers and Sisters who write for **The Tidings** do so on a voluntary basis, and the Magazine is provided **FREE**. The Magazine is available in PDF Format online at www.tidings.org.

If you would like to order a printed subscription to **The Tidings** you may do so simply by making a donation to help cover the printing costs. The Suggested Donation approximates the actual cost of printing and shipping which is **USD \$50.00**; we ask for a Minimum Donation which is **USD \$25.00**. If you can afford to donate more, please do so in order to help out those that cannot afford to.

All subscription information is available online at www.tidings.org. You may subscribe online and make donations online or by mail to the above address. Information on how to subscribe in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa is also available online at www.tidings.org/subscribe.

The Christadelphian Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 5th of the month. Correspondence to the editor: Peter Hemingray, 1244 Pennsylvania Ave, Oakmont, PA 15139, or by e-mail to editor@tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Letters to the editor will only be accepted via e-mail to letters@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, e-mail address, and contact phone numbers. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

TIDINGS

Volume 83, Number 4 / April, 2020



IN THIS ISSUE

Special — Coronavirus	212
Editorial — This Decade	214
Exhortation — Uriah the Hittite, <i>Casmon Gordon</i>	218
Bible Study — All God's Children Have Names, (Part 10), <i>George Booker</i>	222
The Joy of Sunday Schooling — The Commandments of Christ, <i>Jim Harper</i>	228
Reflection — Disconnecting From The Faith, <i>Ben Drepaul</i>	223
Reflection — The Faith That Conquers, (Part 4), <i>Mark Drabenstott</i>	236
History — Conscientious Objection in North America, (Part 11), After World War II, <i>Peter Hemingray</i>	242
Bible Mission — Trinidad and Tobago	248
Letters to the Editor	250
News and Notices	252
Coming Events	255
Thoughts on the Way — Don't Stop Studying the Bible, <i>George Booker</i>	258



CORONAVIRUS

“You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday” (Psa 91:5-6)

As I write this towards the beginning of April, most are secluded in isolation, as the specter of the latest pandemic stalks the nation. Such a restriction on our movements is alien to us all, but we can draw strength from the knowledge to be found in the scriptures. We do not know whether these events foreshadow the return of our Lord, as Jesus beforehand prophesied about the terrible times around the fall of Jerusalem, *“There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:11).*

This is a time for forced reflection in our solitude. It is perhaps no coincidence that the current period of quarantine is 14 days: For in the law of Moses (Leviticus 13) this was the time of isolation for what was termed

leprosy. And at the end of that time, only if there was no evidence of the disease could the individual resume his place in society.

Note that Paul uses the same Greek word for the “separation”

of Peter in Gal 2:12 as the Greek for Lev 13:14: It should have been a period of reflection and learning by Peter, just as this can be a time for contemplation by ourselves. Like the lepers of old, we are “shut up”.

Whether our release is by medical success or the return of our Lord, it is up to us to prepare ourselves. Because of technology, most of us can still share in the remembrance every Sunday, some by sharing visually

It is perhaps no coincidence that the current period of quarantine is 14 days...

in real time, and some by watching streaming video. And we should take the opportunity to reach out to those also isolated, and share words of comfort and hope. We should not wallow in despair, but *“lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”* (Luke 21:28).

So let us remember the words of the Psalmist, almost certainly Moses:

“If you say, ‘The LORD is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent” (Psa 91:9-10).

So as we each withdraw to our tent, we remember indeed it is our God who is our refuge, Our Lord Jesus whose return is our ultimate hope. So let us encourage each other as the day approaches.

A glowing tent is pitched in a vast, sandy desert landscape under a dark, starry night sky. In the background, snow-capped mountains rise against the horizon. The tent is illuminated from within, casting a warm glow. The foreground shows the ripples of sand dunes.

*The Lord is my
refuge...*



Editorial.

This Decade

New Beginnings

I had big shoes to fill when I somewhat reluctantly agreed to become the new Editor of *The Tidings*, beginning in May 2010. Bro. George Booker and the late Brethren Don Styles and Bob Lloyd had, between them, been editors since 1957. Four editors in 63 years is not too bad, as we reflect on the changes in society, technology, and the world. As for Israel, the focus on our future hope of the Kingdom, this era stretched from the end of the Suez crisis, through two more Middle East wars, until the somewhat abortive latest Israeli — Palestinian peace plan of 2020.

So it is with hope for a future in which we see the events in the Middle East and the world reach their ultimate end that I pass the baton of editorship to Bro. David Jennings, who will take

over with the June issue. He has been Associate Editor since June 2019, and has been busy working on exciting future endeavors and directions for the magazine. Along with the changes to the layout and subscription that have already been made, I am sure we all look forward with anticipation and excitement to the new look of *The Tidings*.

A Look Back

The last ten years has seen many changes in politics, the environment, and economics. 2010 dawned with great enthusiasm, but much trepidation. The politics in many nations has become increasingly polarized, notably with the election of a different type of US president in Donald

2010 dawned with great enthusiasm, but much trepidation...



Trump. Internationally, ISIS came and (almost) went, Brexit took place in the UK, and the world slowly recovered from the world-wide crash of 2008. The climate became a major concern, as the global temperature rose along with sea levels, and floods, droughts, storms and associated events seem to have increased in severity. Israel seems to have emerged little scathed: the turmoil in Gaza and in the West Bank continued unabated, but its status as the regional super-power was unchallenged, as Benjamin Netanyahu has dominated its politics. A sign perhaps of more prophetic significance than Brexit, in my opinion, was the start of production of the Tamar gas field in

2013, which made Israel almost energy self-sufficient for natural gas.

The Tidings

Over the decade, the magazine has changed in several ways, both small and large.

- Our special issues have been focused on broad topics, with multiple authors.
- I have attempted to widen the demographics of our writers, by including as many Sisters as I could, and two issues were almost entirely written by them.
- We gradually included color and increased the number of illustrations, culminating in the transition to a full color issue in January 2020 along with a completely new layout, thanks almost entirely to the work of Bre. Jeff Gelineau and Jason Grant. It is hoped the new layout, and the slight increase in text size, will have made it more easily readable, as well as more visually attractive.
- We introduced an electronic version of *The Tidings*, and this year it was made freely available to all. As we cease to focus exclusively on print, with its significant time lapse, it is to be hoped we can improve the timely interaction with our readers and the community.
- We have attempted to include in our readership and authors those who are within the wider Christadelphian community. In

many cases, we are divided more by history and distrust than by doctrine.

The future is in the hands of others: I have no crystal ball, but can hope and pray *The Tidings* will continue to help, strengthen, and broaden its role in the Christadelphian community, particularly in North America.

Our Community

Our community in North America has seemed to maintain its numbers, as far as I can tell, with perhaps a small boost as Christadelphian asylum seekers join ecclesias here, or form their own meeting as is the case with the Des Moines ecclesia. Most of these new members come from Africa, which is unlike the situation in the UK, where the influx of Iranians has, anecdotally, stopped the long decline of numbers there. However, the community has been somewhat disrupted, if not in numbers, in internal cohesion, by the attempts to unite with a section of the Unamended community. This attempt has taken many forms this decade: there has been little comment in this magazine lately about the effects, which are still ongoing at the time of this writing.¹ As various groups strive to find a way to both unite, and heal the apparent local divisions which have taken place, all we can do is encourage the efforts and pray for a peaceful resolution.

Otherwise, even as our readership grows older, enthusiastic young members continue to join us, greatly influenced as they are by the almost overwhelming distractions of our modern society. Smart phones are ubiquitous: and, perhaps

unfortunately, many are seen to consult them almost continuously. Perhaps, in our services, they are following along with their Bible apps: hopefully not Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat or even newer ones like TikTok! With all the other distractions they have, along with school, and outside activities, it is not surprising that our young people find little time for Bible Study, and few read any Christadelphian publications, and many even appear to not read their Bible regularly, although of course there are notable exceptions. I am sure, as *The Tidings* evolves, we will see more focus on addressing this vital part of our community's future.

The Future

Only our Heavenly father knows the future. Personally, my wife and I have been grateful for this opportunity to be of some small service this past ten years. Although Bre. Carl Wolfe and Bob Lloyd managed to find time to edit *The Tidings* as well as support a family, a monthly magazine makes it difficult to do both, so I was fortunate I did not have to combine editing with a full-time job. I have begun to appreciate my allotted years: "*Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away*" (Psa 90:10). Before I enter my eternal rest, I can only hope I manage to finally complete those tasks I hoped to accomplish when my full-time career came to an end:

- To compile the considerable amount of information I have amassed on Military Service in North America into a book.

Only a small fraction of this has appeared in my articles, the last one appearing this month, God willing.

- And my major effort is to produce a History of the Christadelphian Community, an effort I started many years ago when I wrote my account of John Thomas. There has been no systematic study made by a Christadelphian in this area that I know of. I have access to most of the magazines, including those that united with the Central (Amended) community in the 1950s, and if anyone has information to aid in this large task, I would be most grateful if they could get in touch with me.

Concerning the future of our North American community, *The Tidings* is in capable hands, so others are in a better position to comment than I. I can only hope and pray that the current turmoil will soon be resolved, to the praise of our Lord and redeemer.

And as we watch world events, my focus is, as always, on Israel. I believe it is, for really the first time since Solomon, dwelling in “peace and security”, as a precursor to the time of the return of our Lord, when most will least expect it. And with that thought, I conclude my final editorial.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

- 1 See “Update Concerning the 2018 Final Agreement”, *The Tidings*, Oct 2018, p. 470



Many thanks to Bro. Peter for diligently leading *The Tidings* for the past 10 years.

Some of the past 10 years were challenging as we struggled through production problems, but Bro. Peter was dedicated to helping guide the magazine to a good position.

Bro. Peter’s vast historical knowledge has shaped the magazine over his tenure. We have enjoyed several series of articles from Bro. Peter. The series on John Thomas, along with the current series on Conscientious Objection in North America stand out in our memories. We also appreciate his many thoughtful editorials.

We thank Bro. Peter for his tireless efforts and pray for blessings on him and his wife, Pat.

We also thank **Bro. Jeff Wallace** for his 16 years of service as he departs the Tidings Committee. We look forward to Bro. Jeff and Sis. Ethel continuing to contribute to the magazine. **May God be with you.**



Exhortation.

URIAH THE HITTITE

David and Uriah

Let us consider the words recorded in the last verse of 2 Samuel 23: “*Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all*” (Vs 29).

They may seem like simple words, but they speak volumes and contain many and various sorts of learning, counsel and exhortations. In order to properly understand the verse that mentions Uriah the Hittite, and why it was important that his name was mentioned as one of the heroes, please allow me establish a context. Firstly, David, or rather King David, was a man after God’s own heart. He is set forth as a good example of someone that we should look up to, try to learn from, and emulate in our own personal life. Our Lord Jesus is said to sit on the throne of King David.

“And when he had removed him (Saul), he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave their testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will” (Acts 13:22).

Understanding why David was called a man after God’s own heart can be seen when contrasted with Saul, Israel’s first king. When Samuel the seer confronted Saul about his failure to carry out God’s instructions, Saul immediately lied about it, and then went on to blame other people for his failure. By contrast, when the prophet Nathan confronted David in the matter of his adultery with Bathsheba, David quickly admitted his wrongdoing, accepted responsibility for his failure, and

then repented in sackcloth and ashes. He truly abased himself and sought forgiveness for his sin.

Saul did not do that. After Samuel rebuked Saul, he went on to become even worse in his behavior and gradually grew further and further away from God. David's response was different, when his sin was discovered, in that he grew humbler, sought the LORD even more, and became closer and closer to God. David was able to recover by seeking help and forgiveness from the LORD, and he was the better for it. David was a good man, while Saul was not.

With regards to the 2 Samuel 23 passage that mentions Uriah, if we consider the words in their immediate context, we will notice that it was a time when King David was old and stricken in years, and his death was approaching. He was organizing things for his successor and, he compiled a list of his most valiant men. He listed them out, and he reserved Uriah the Hittite as very the last name to mention. This immediately draws attention.

David was a very skillful man of war, and shed the blood of many people. He was a warrior king, who went on many campaigns and fought alongside many men over his military career. There would be a very large pool of names of soldiers that he could have included in this list, but he chose only thirty-seven, and this highlights their importance. There is mention of some of the military exploits that some of these men did, like breaking through an enemy line

for the purpose of fetching water to quench David's thirst. The fact that Uriah's name is mentioned is telling, especially the fact that his name is the last in the list of heroes.

So who exactly was Uriah? Uriah lived in a house that was right beside the king's palace. The fact that he lived so close to the king, strongly suggest that he would have been a trusted neighbor, and would more than likely be a personal friend of David. The very facts are that:

- He lived so close to David
- He married a Jewish Girl, whose father was Eliam, and grandfather was Ahithophel, one of David's counsellors
- His name, Uriah, was Hebrew, and means "The LORD (Yahweh) is my light"

All this seems to show that, although by (remote?) ancestry a Hittite, he was fully assimilated into the Jewish nation.

The incident with Bathsheba was said to occur in the war season, or at "a time when kings go forth to battle". David and Uriah were comrades and fellow soldiers. When the war season came, instead of going to war as is expected by the leader of the army, David stayed home, while Uriah went to war to fight David's battles. Uriah was a Hittite, and since David mentioned him among the military elite, he may very well have been a senior person in David's army. Uriah was a loyal, faithful, trustworthy friend of David. This all brings about the gravity and the grievousness of David's sin.

The summary of the whole incident, was that David lusted after the wife of a close neighbor, and a trusted family friend, and when he realized his betrayal was going to be exposed, he arranged to have a faithful soldier friend killed. It would have been very difficult to conceal the whole thing, because Many people must have been aware of what he was doing, such as the servants in his house, messengers, the generals in the army, the soldiers who set up Uriah on the battlefield and so on. Each of these people would be heartbroken to see what their leader was doing to a good man. Even the enemies of Israel may have learnt about it as God said, *“David had given the enemies of God an occasion to blaspheme”* (cited from 2 Sam 12:14). It was an awful thing that David did, and everyone seems to have known about it.

All of these things form a backdrop to God’s kindness, mercy and His willingness to forgive David, and us too, if we truly humble ourselves, repent and seek for forgiveness. David’s sin was great, but God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness was even greater. This gives hope and comfort in our own personal life and the situations we face on a day-to-day basis. The real problem is perhaps not that we sin, but rather how we respond when we fail to live up to God’s requirements of us. We all are

aware that we do sin, but we are to be humble enough to recognize that God is aware of the fact that we sin and is more than willing to help us.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Atonement

Forgiveness is the most important thing that God blesses us with. The concept of forgiveness is integral to our salvation, and as a principle it runs through everything in scripture. The atonement was about forgiveness and bringing about reconciliation between the Almighty and us. The

Hebrew verb ‘to atone’ (*kaphar*) means ‘cover’, so the noun ‘atonement’ (*kippurim* pl.) is a form of ‘covering’.

The English word ‘atonement’ is a way of translating the Hebrew idea of ‘covering’ sins as an idiom for ‘forgiving’ sins.

The basic concept of atonement is covering for sins coming from a merciful God, not an angry God being appeased or bought off. God is working in our lives to bring us back into friendship with Himself.

Because of the atonement and through our faith in Jesus, we have a right relationship with God. We are now His friends, and not His enemies. And because we are His friends, it changes everything.

***All of these things form
a backdrop to God’s
kindness, mercy and His
willingness to forgive
David, and us too, if we
truly humble ourselves,
repent and seek for
forgiveness.***

As much as we would like to consider and declare ourselves to be righteous, in the end what really matters is whether or not we obtain forgiveness from God. Salvation is a gift God blesses us with because He is righteous, and not because we are righteous. God blesses us with His grace because we have faith to believe in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God, and that he died to save us from our sin, and the consequences of our sin. We must always resist the temptations to exalt ourselves, especially if we think that because we have been baptized 80 years, or that we have done many good works over the years, or because we know everything, or that we are correct about every detail about the scriptures then God is obligated to save us. That is not going to work: as the scripture has said many times. We

are to be humble and recognize that we are saved by the mercy of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We should never get ahead of ourselves and try to establish our own righteousness, nor try to boast about our knowledge or our works, as we know that “boasting is excluded”. God desires for us to be humble.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17).

We should also be honest, especially to ourselves. Remember, we cannot fool nor deceive God. God knows our most personal and intimate thoughts that we try to hide from everyone. He knows who we are so we may as well be honest. God is always there willing and waiting for us to come to Him and to confess our sins.

God desires us to have an intimate relationship with Him through Jesus. There is a big difference between knowing about God and actually knowing God. Knowledge is needful and important, but as Jesus said:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

We cannot stop at just having knowledge of God’s words and knowing about God, we must go further to get to know God for ourselves.

*Casmon Gordon
(Brooklyn, NY)*



Bible Study.

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN HAVE NAMES (PART 10)

A Warning Against False Teachers

“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned” Romans 16:17-20.

False Teachers

Paul concludes his letter to the Roman ecclesia by warning the brethren against the danger of false teachers. Almost every phrase in this section is an obvious allusion to the Genesis record of the serpent and the woman's seed, in which the serpent subtly cast doubt on God's Word while instructing Eve contrary to that Word.

These false teachers in Paul's day were almost certainly Judaizers. These were Jewish members of the ecclesia of Christ; they believed in Christ, but nevertheless felt that keeping

the Mosaic Law was still essential to salvation, or at least highly desirable for all believers. These Judaizers would often seek to convince Jewish believers (and even Gentile believers) to follow their practices also (see Gal 1:6-9; 3:1; 5:3-5), presumably because the Judaizers' belief was that it was a more righteous way of life than simply believing in the gospel of Christ. In Paul's analogy, they played the role of the serpent — they were tempters in the garden of God. Likewise, Jesus had spoken of the Pharisees in his day as the serpent's “seed” (cp Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; John 8:44). Following the example

of their spiritual “father” (i.e., the serpent in Eden), they professed a superior knowledge and thus were able to lead away gullible ones (2 Cor 11:13-15).

Even if the Judaizers didn’t succeed in pulling Jewish Christians back to the Law, the Temple and the synagogue, they may still have succeeded in driving wedges between the Jewish believers and their Gentile counterparts. They may have achieved this by encouraging Jewish believers to take controversial positions on non-essential issues, which in turn created harshness and unrest in that segment of the ecclesia.

The influence of this particular adversary or “Satan” was drastically reduced by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. But the final crushing of “Satan” in all its aspects must of course be the work of the glorified Christ and his saints at his second coming.

Robert Roberts speaks of these:

“There are divisions that are uncalled for, and therefore sinful. Paul refers to such [in Rom 16:17]. He was referring, no doubt, to the factions arising out of personal preferences, but the warning applies to all divisions that ought not be made... It is possible to go too far in our demands upon fellow-believers. How far we ought to go and where to stop, is at one time or other a perplexing problem

to most earnest minds.” (True Principles and Uncertain Details, *The Christadelphian*, 1898, p. 182.)

The schisms or divisions caused by the Judaizing element in the early ecclesias were wrong, for two reasons:

1. They were based on matters of questionable importance (as Robert Roberts called it above: “personal preferences”), which were neither fundamental nor essential — but were certainly “contrary to the teaching [of unity] you have learned” (Rom 16:17).
2. As if holding firm to the first principles were not enough, these brethren were putting unnecessary stumbling blocks in the path of other believers, making their journey to the Kingdom even more difficult (see Matt 23:15).

Rom 16:17: I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions: “Urge” (“beseech”: KJV) is “*parakaleo*”: to call alongside, to encourage. It is the same word used in various forms for “exhort” or “exhortation”, and should refer, not to a command, but to an encouraging or beseeching in love. As though Paul were saying, ‘I cannot

There are divisions that are uncalled for, and therefore sinful.

and will not command you in this, but I will urge you in the kindest possible way...

“Divisions” is the Greek “*dichostasia*”, and may signify dissensions and party spirits, without necessarily going as far as disfellowship or excommunication of others.

It is important to note that Paul advises the brethren to “mark” (KJV), or watch out for, and then to “avoid” those who cause divisions (1 John 2:19), not those who follow them. The reason for taking special notice of those who cause dissension and division is that they may deceive the “naive” or “simple” (Rom 16:18).

This is a distinction comparable to that between the wolves and the sheep in Christ’s parable of John 10. The wolves must be marked out and branded for what they are, and even for their own possible reclamation, but especially to warn the flock upon which they prey. The causers of division are the ones to be wary of — not the ones being led in the wrong direction! The simple sheep must be protected, not lumped together with the wolves so that all alike are avoided. To avoid the sheep because they might be guilty, or because we might become guilty by association with them, is to go further than the apostle ever intended.

And put obstacles in your way: The Greek “*skandala*” (the plural of “*skandalon*”) means stumbling blocks, and, specifically here, causes

of sin. The term is too general to yield anything specific to our knowledge of the propagandists. However, the same word is used in Rom 14:13, where the context suggests influences within the congregations that tended to elevate various elements of the Mosaic Law to the level of first principles of the Faith (cp the same word in Rom 9:33; 11:9).

That are contrary to the teaching you have learned: “The teaching” could refer to the whole of the gospel, as in Rom 6:17, or more specifically to the “spirit of unity” which Paul taught in Rom 15:5,6 and elsewhere.

Keep away from them: “*Ekklineo*” means to avoid or stay away from. The same word occurs in 1 Pet 3:11: “turn from evil”.

Romans 16:18: For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites: That is, “their own belly” (KJV). This is a euphemism, by which is meant, of course, natural appetites or desires which are inappropriate:

“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly

To avoid the sheep because they might be guilty, or because we might become guilty by association with them, is to go further than the apostle ever intended...

things”

(Phil 3:18,19; see Titus 3:3; 2 Pet 2:18).

Some men emphasize what is misleading or even false because they are interested in controversies and quarrels, and thus they are prone to envy, suspicions and friction (1Tim 6:3-5). Other men do so because they are seeking improper financial gain (v 5).

The allusion to the appetite or belly seems to make sense only if the serpent in the garden of Eden (Rom 16:20) ate the fruit of the tree itself. Consider these points:

- Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food (Gen 3:6).
- The serpent was more crafty or subtle than any other creature (Gen 3:1).
- Perhaps the fruit itself gave the serpent the power of speech — i.e., to be like the “Elohim” (Gen 3:5).
- “*You shall not surely die!*” (Gen 3:4) implies: ‘See! Look at me. I ate the fruit and I’m not dead!’
- The subsequent curse of the serpent was to crawl upon its belly, and to eat dust (Gen 3:14).

Paul alludes to this serpent-like beguiling of Eve again: “*I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ*” (2 Cor 11:3).

By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people:

Smooth talk and flattery are always the tools of unscrupulous salesmen and promoters.

“Smooth talk” is “*chrestologia*”: attractive speech; it occurs only this once in the New Testament. Literally, it means: kind words — but in the context it plainly implies deception masquerading as kind words.

Barclay writes, “The Greeks themselves defined a ‘*chrestologos*’ as ‘a man who speaks well and who acts ill’. He is the kind of man who, behind a facade of pious words, is a bad influence who leads astray, not by direct attack, but by subtlety, who pretends to serve Christ, but in reality is destroying the faith” (Daily Study Bible: Romans).

“Flattery” is “*eulogia*”, a word that simply means good speech, i.e., blessing and praise. But sometimes such speech may be excessive and spoken with ulterior motives — then it becomes self-serving flattery. Good words spoken in good causes are a great blessing, and their usefulness is increased. But on the contrary, good words spoken in bad causes may become destructive many times over. The tongue is a small part of the body, but it can generate a little spark that ignites a great fire (Jas 3:5,6).

“Naive” people are unsophisticated believers, who may be inclined to listen to anyone who speaks in a pleasant and kindly manner. In fact, they may be so much inclined in that direction that they may not bother to test what they have heard by the Bible itself (1Thess 5:21). In just such a

way, they may unconsciously fall into the trap of believing what is not true simply because it is spoken in the most charming or exciting way.

Before they realize it, the listeners may be subtly pointed or led in the wrong direction, and in turn they may mislead others. Such naïve believers are either unaware of or indifferent to the command of Christ:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Matt 7:15).

Likewise, the naïve may pay no attention to the words of John:

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit [i.e., teaching], but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1John 4:1).

Romans 16:19: Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

Paul was confident that his readers could handle this threat because they had a reputation for following the apostles’ instructions. The innocent among God’s people tend to accept false teachers, and the wise normally reject them. Paul wanted his readers to be wise (like a serpent) concerning all good, and innocent (like a lamb) only regarding evil (Matt 10:16). To paraphrase Paul, ‘I want you to be wise enough to know how to protect yourselves, but at the same time I want you to be innocent enough so as to do no harm to anyone else.’

Romans 16:20: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

The God of peace: For the apostle who wrote the letter to the Romans, peace was:

- unity with God, made possible only by justification through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1);
- the state of mind achieved in a life controlled by God’s spirit, that is, God’s character and teachings (Rom 8:6);
- a life of calmness and goodwill toward all men, to be found in those who truly had faith in God (Rom 12:18; 14:19); and
- the result of a solid hope in God’s promises, accompanied by a joy-filled life in Christ (Rom 15:13).

As Paul begins to wrap up his letter to the Romans, this is the second time in the conclusion alone that Paul refers to “the God of peace” — the first time being Rom 15:33: “*The God of peace be with you all.*”

Given Paul’s presumed purpose in writing to the Romans, “the God of peace” is a very persuasive phrase. It is as though Paul, in using the phrase time after time, is encouraging his readers to seek for that unity of fellowship which the gospel enjoins. The forgiveness of sins through Christ binds all believers, Jew and Gentile, in one Body — a Body characterized by joy in one another’s company, and goodwill toward all men.

Will soon crush Satan under your feet: Here is a plain allusion to Gen 3:15: “*And I will put enmity between*

you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

In this case, the serpent or "satan" (the adversary) undoubtedly refers to human beings. The context describes "smooth talk and flattery"

by which the serpent "deceives the minds of naive people" (Rom 16:18). Particularly, this was the

Judaizers, who sought to draw other believers, especially Gentile believers, away from their freedom in Christ and into an enforced bondage to the Law of Moses.

Likewise, in 2 Cor 11, the "satan" (v 14) or "serpent" (v 3) is equated with "false apostles [who] masquerade as apostles of Christ" (v 13) but preach a different gospel (v 4) by which they exploit other believers (v 20).

The "soon" here suggests that Paul was looking forward to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, which actually happened only a few years later, even though after Paul's own death. The removal of the Temple with its services and sacrifices would be visual evidence to corroborate the New Testament teaching that salvation could no longer be found in God's special temple at Jerusalem. The new house of worship — the new "temple" — would henceforth be the spiritual Body of Christ, the ecclesia or congregation of believers throughout the world.

Paul's final blessing magnifies God's grace, as does this whole epistle. Usually such a benediction signals the end of a Pauline letter (e.g., 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 2 Tim 4:22; Phlm 1:25), but the apostle has still more to say this time.

Paul... is encouraging his readers to seek for that unity of fellowship which the gospel enjoins.

There is some variation among New Testament manuscripts here in Romans 16: 20 as well as in verses

24 and 27 — concerning the phrase "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*" Of course, none of the variations have any effect on the fundamental meaning of these verses.

The question is whether the phrase appears once, twice or three times (among some combination of verses 20, 24 and 27), and precisely where it should be placed in the text in each instance. The second question, of course, is the exact wording in each of the possibilities. Understandably, these questions have caused some disagreement among textual scholars.

Perhaps Paul and his secretary sent several slightly different letters to the various small house-churches of the large Roman ecclesia (see Rom 16:5,10,11,14,15). Once scribes began to copy each of those letters for later generations, then the small textual variations would start showing up also.

George Booker
(Austin Leander, TX)



Sunday School.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST

Putting them into practice

Older brothers and sisters are familiar with **The Commandments of Christ**, compiled by Bro. Robert Roberts. But what about our children? Have we ever made a concerted effort to acquaint them with The Commandments of Christ and talk about how to put the commandments into practice? Families can do this together, and Sunday School and CYC are good places to address this life goal.

“You are my friends if you do what I command you” – Jesus, John 15:14.

Years ago, I tackled this with our CYC. This article shares a few of the practical things we considered. The activities relate to specific commandments as Bro. Roberts organized them in his little book.

I – Concerning God

4 – Be imitators of God. Be like Him in His kindness to the undeserving. (Matt 5:45-48; Eph 5:1).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the

same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:43-48).

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph 5:1).

Activity 1 – Every day God makes the sun rise and the rain fall on believers and unbelievers alike. Every single man, woman, and child on earth lives and breathes because God sustains his or her life. Faith has nothing to do with receiving these benefits from God.

1. Be imitators of God. Start by having each person write down two acts of kindness that they can do for other people on a regular basis, regardless of whether the people are faithful to God. Then compile a group list.
2. Select at least one act of kindness from the list and talk about ways to implement it in daily life. How would you give this benefit to others?
3. Would you ever stop giving this benefit to others? Explain.

Activity 2 – Have everyone write down the kindest thing that they have personally seen someone do for someone else. Be specific. Then share these with each other and talk about how we can do similar things. What does it take to make “kind things” a regular part of what we do?

6 – Have faith in God. Cast your care upon Him. He knows your need and will provide. (Mark 11:22; Matt 6:25; Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7).

“And Jesus answered them, ‘Have faith in God’ ”(Mark 11:22).

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Matt 6:25).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil 4:6).

“(Cast) all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pet 5:7).

Activity 3 – People pray for all kinds of things and believe that they receive them. Here are five examples. Think about each example and talk about whether it illustrates the kind of faith in God that Christ commands us to have? One way to answer this question is to identify the perceived need that underlies each prayer. Then decide whether you think the need is a Godly one.

1. A middle-aged couple wins the lottery. They become instant millionaires. They are interviewed on television and say that this is an answer to prayer.
2. A faith healer preaches that God does not want anyone to be sick. She lays her hands on a feverish man and prays over him. The man gets well.
3. A Christadelphian couple constantly bad-mouth other people behind their backs. They realize how ungodly this is and begin to pray that they can overcome the habit. With steady

praying they begin to improve their behavior.

4. A Christadelphian ecclesia encounters opposition from a local church for conducting a public Bible seminar. Visitors stop coming to the seminar. Earnest prayers are offered that God will remove this obstacle to preaching, and a seminar is successfully carried out in a different location.
5. With the cost of living going up all the time, a hard-working mother prays for a pay raise. She gets a promotion and it becomes easier to provide for her family.

Activity 4 – Think of things that the Bible teaches us to pray for. Have each person take a couple minutes to write down as many as they can. Then compile a group prayer list. Select at least one item from the list and talk about how God answers this prayer. Here are two to get the list started:

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”
(Psa122:6).

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12).

If anyone has a Bible app, use it to find other things to add to the prayer list. E.g., look at how the word “pray” is used in the Bible. And don’t end the activity without praying together about the things on your list.

II – Concerning Christ

15 – Abide in him. Do not let him slip from your memory and affections.
(John 15:7; Hebrews 2:1)

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you”
(John 15:7).

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it:”
(Heb 2:1).

Activity 5 – “Abide in me.” What does it mean to be in Christ?

1. Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27, and Col 2:12-13 identify how we enter Christ. What’s the key? Is this just an initiation ceremony, or is there more to it? Explain.
2. When we join any organization, we are in the organization. This gives us access to the rights and privileges of the organization. It is like this in Christ and better. Many New Testament passages speak of the privileges – or, more accurately, the blessings – of being in Christ. What blessings are identified in these passages: Rom 5:1-2; Rom 8:37-39; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 15:22; Gal 3:26-29; Col 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10? Can we ever lose these blessings?
3. “Abide in Christ.” What does this mean to you? What’s the key? How does abiding in Christ affect the lives that we live? Have everyone write down at least two ways that belonging to Christ changes a person’s life. Share these and talk about the practical implications.

Activity 6 – If we are in Christ, the New Testament makes it clear that Christ must also be in us. Read the following passages and pick out the key words and ideas that are associated with “Christ in us”: Rom 8:10; Rom 13:14; 2 Cor 13:5-6; Gal 1:15-16; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17ff; Col 3:1-4ff; 2 Tim 2:19. Talk about what these mean in practical terms.

VI – Concerning Your Actions

58 – Labor not to be rich: having food and raiment, be content. (1 Tim 6:8; John 6:27; Matt 6:19).

“But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” (1 Tim 6:8).

“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal” (John 6:27).

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matt 6:19).

Activity 7 – Do we really believe this?

1. Have each person list what they think are the basic necessities of life. Have them number their lists, with #1 being most important, etc. Then compile a group list and talk about why each thing on the list is considered necessary. Does everyone agree?
2. Why are most of us not content to have just food and raiment? Have each person write down two things that influence them to want more than the basic necessities of life. Compile a group list, and then talk about ways to keep the influences from taking control of our lives.
3. There are brothers and sisters in the world who have lost everything: for example, Christadelphians are caught in the crossfire of war or are fleeing persecution because of

their faith. They may not even have adequate food and raiment. Ask each person to write down how they think they would cope with this situation if they found themselves in it. What would help them cope best? Share thoughts.

4. Have everyone write a personal definition of contentment. Share the definitions.

71 – Pay your debts: owe no man anything, but to love one another. (Rom 13:7-8).

“Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:7-8).

Activity 8 – Where do you draw the line?

1. Have each person make two lists: List 1 – What do you consider to be acceptable debt? I.e., list things that it's all right to owe payments on. Why do you think these debts are acceptable? List 2 – What do you consider to be unacceptable debt. I.e., list things to pay for, in full, or else get along without. Why do you think incurring debt on these things is unacceptable?
2. Discuss the two lists. Identify a basis for deciding what is acceptable debt and what is not. What spiritual factors need to be taken into account?

3. According to Rom 13:7-8, what debts do we always owe? To whom do we owe them? Brainstorm practical ways to pay these debts in everyday life.

VII – Concerning Your Thoughts and Speech

79 – Swear not at all: let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay. (Matt 5:34; Jas 5:12).

“But I say to you, ‘Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God’ ”(Matt 5:34).

“But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation” (Jas 5:12).

Activity 9 – Truth is now treated as relative in the 21st century: “My truth is what’s right for me; your truth is what’s right for you. The two don’t have to be the same.”

1. Have everyone write down one reason why more and more people are thinking this way. Then talk about the reasons.
2. Write three words on the board: integrity, accountability, relationships. Have everyone choose one of the words and

write down how they think it is affected by the “my-truth, your-truth” mindset. Talk about this.

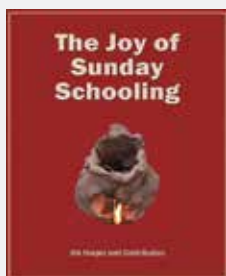
3. If you have not already discussed the question, do so now: What place does God have in this mindset?
4. Where do you stand on this issue?

Activity 10 – Do you mean what you say? Can you be trusted? Allow a few minutes for everyone to think about these questions and then talk about the answers.

1. What happens to your personal integrity when you repeatedly make promises and don’t keep them?
2. What’s missing in a person’s character when he or she does not do the things they say they will do?
3. What does Jesus want from us in this regard? Why?

Send me an email if you would like a digital copy of this activity. It can also be printed directly from the electronic edition of this month’s Tidings magazine, available at tidings.org/magazines.

Jim Harper, (Meriden, CT)
joyofss2020@gmail.com



The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Available in electronic format for \$10.00 at
www.joyofss.com

The Joy of Sunday Schooling is an extensive resource to help Sunday School teachers and youth leaders in their important work. Download a copy today.



Reflection.

DISCONNECTING FROM THE FAITH

A five-year research project¹ explored the challenges of faith development among teens and young adults within a rapidly shifting culture. There were eight national studies, interviewing teenagers, young adults, parents, youth pastors, and senior pastors, and they focused on those who were regular church-goers during their teen years and their reasons for disconnection from church life after age 15. Here are the six reasons²:

Reason #1 — Churches seem overprotective³. Christianity feels stifling, fear-based, “Christians demonize everything outside of the church” ignoring the problems of the “real world” and too concerned that “movies, music, and video games are harmful”.

I can certainly relate to this, as during my CYC years we were told

that movie night was not going to edify us in any way. As much as I was never really into what was on the screen, the fact that a group of young people were chilling together in a relatively safe environment was all that mattered. It created a bond that could not easily be broken, so that later on in life when faced with various decisions, when one of the group was attempting to go astray, it was easier to pull them back as an insider rather than seen as judging from the outside.

Reason #2 — Christianity is shallow. “Church is boring” “faith is not relevant to my career or interests”, “the Bible is not taught clearly or often enough”, “God seems missing from my experience of church”.

No doubt for those who have not taken the time to understand why

we are here in the first place, having to endure a Bible talk will seem like unending torture, and eventually they will start to blame the presenter rather than themselves. What can we do? Prayer and lots of patience. I have some cousins that for over 20 years have been asking where is the nearest meeting place and promising to come. We continue to encourage them, we have ‘fun’ activities in place of the traditional lectures. Summer camps, BBQ’s, workshops, retreats, open sessions to just sit and socialize without any formal agendas.

Reason #3 — Churches are antagonistic to science and are

out of step with the scientific world we live in, and “the young people have been turned off by the creation-versus-evolution debate.” They are struggling to find ways of staying faithful to their beliefs and to their professional calling in science-related industries.

This is an age-old problem where those in the education field are faced with the dilemma of creation vs. evolution. It is a problem peculiar to recent times. Christadelphians, from John Thomas on, including many with scientific educations, have regarded the claims of some evolutionists to discredit the Bible as spurious. The scriptures teach eternal truth, not science: biologists, physicians, physicists and others marvel at the complexity and beauty of all nature, and are thankful to our heavenly Father for His creation. In our modern society, those without

appropriate education will find it difficult to provide for their families, and those who have chosen career paths where there are conflicts with meeting times and events will have more of a challenge to maintain a balance as disciples of Christ.

Reason #4 — “Young Christians’ church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic, judgmental.”

Many young believers don’t know how to live up to the church’s expectations of chastity and sexual purity in this culture, especially as the age of first marriage is now commonly delayed to the late

twenties. They are as sexually active as their non-Christian peers; they “have made mistakes and feel

judged because of them.” And the churches’ “teachings on sexuality and birth control are out of date.”

When it comes to God’s Word it simply does not get out of date. That is a concept that many have been led to believe as a cop out. Yes, many of our young people have fallen victim to the promiscuous lifestyle, and are reaping the consequences with failing marriages and problems in the homes. We simply cannot allow the new age standards to dominate the thinking and rationale of our young.

Reason #5 — They wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity.

Young people are being shaped by a culture that esteems open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance. They are the most eclectic generation in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, technological

When it comes to God’s Word it simply does not get out of date.

tools and sources of authority. They want to find areas of common ground with each other, even if that means glossing over real differences. “Churches are afraid of the beliefs of other faiths” and they feel “forced to choose between churches.” “They feel it is like a country club, only for insiders”.

Many terms and phrases have been coined in recent years to express the feelings and desires of the younger generation: live and let live, God loves everyone, stop hating, gender equality, non-denominational churches. Hence, the inflexibility of the traditional church groups to accommodate the contemporary views comes across as ‘members only’. We can try to alleviate this by having more interactive sessions around these topics, allowing those who feel this way to voice their concerns and then reassure them that we are open to discussing these cliquish feelings and try to dispel the false interpretations that often find their way in our midst.

Reason #6 — The church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.

It is not a place that allows them to express doubts. They do not feel safe admitting that sometimes Christianity does not make sense or “to ask their most pressing life questions”, or have “significant

intellectual doubts about their faith”. They also do not get help with “depression, or other emotional problems” they experience.

Growing up at the meeting, there was a dear old sister whose famous line was, “this church aint’ got no love!” I suppose there was an element of truth to the matter, as we tend to be strong on doctrine and stronger on those who do not meet up to our standards. Not that we should tolerate all sorts of criticisms, or those who feel we should simply change the way we do things because it is outdated. Perhaps we could allow folks to vent a little more. Part of the issue has to do with the fact that there isn’t a format for disclosing doubts, or emotional problems, without getting shut down or dismissed. I know a few meetings have begun various counseling groups and hotlines for anyone who would like to share without the fear of being shunned or ignored. Perhaps with a little training and sensitivity we can all reach out to those who have left, or are thinking of leaving, due to this downfall, and hopefully we can prevent any unforeseen circumstances reassuring them that we are all human and working to support each other in this walk.

*Ben Drepaul
(Brooklyn, NY)*

Notes:

1 See “You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith” by Dana Kinnaman.

2 <https://www.barna.com/research/six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church/>

The numbered reasons were taken from this website. The comments are from my own experience.

3 “Churches” and “Church” has been used here as quoted from original sources, but the word “Ecclesia” would be an appropriate substitution relevant to our Community.



Reflection.

THE FAITH THAT CONQUERS

Part 4: Conclusion

In it for Life

Faith perseveres.

They were exactly a half-mile long. The soybean rows were long and straight, verdant green against the clay loam and blue sky. There was only one problem — the weeds grew alongside the soybeans. So, our family would set out at one end, hoes in hand, and wage war on the weeds. The battles were all exactly a half-mile long. My parents were smart. They put the water and lemonade at the other end — an incentive to get there. But along the way, the sun beating down, you would inevitably encounter a nasty thistle patch that really slowed you down. Mid-way through those half-mile rows is where I learned my first lesson in

perseverance. It was not my last. Each of us takes one master class on perseverance after another in this life. When enduring these classes, the time inevitably comes in our life when we are tempted to just give up. The burden we bear may feel crushing. The race may have simply worn us out. A tragic event may leave us shaking our fist at God. We may feel utterly alone. We may be in pain that seems unending. Sooner or later, a little voice in the back of our mind says, “Just give up. God’s not there.” If we have the faith that pleases God, we will respond with five simple words:

I will never give up.

The Crowning Virtue of Faith

The crowning virtue of faith is perseverance. Never giving up defines a faith-full life. Perseverance defined our Lord's faith. He never gave up on that long, lonely road to the cross — no matter that his dearest friends were fighting amongst themselves and that one would betray him. It defined the faith of Abraham — boldly starting a journey to an unknown land and leaning fully on God, even when asked to slowly ascend the mount and offer his beloved son. It defined the faith of Paul, who could so easily have given up when flogged, beaten with rods, shipwrecked or stoned and left for dead.

Most of us can probably quote the opening verses of Hebrews 11, especially when someone asks us to define faith. But the conclusion of the Faith Chapter (actually in chapter 12) may be even more important, and one we may not stress enough. After recounting amazing, beautiful lives that were faithful, the writer brings us to this dramatic conclusion:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1-2)¹.

The idea here is a simple one. Faith is like a marathon that spans our life. What defines marathon runners is that they just keep going. They never give up. As you may be aware, every marathon runner has the experience of “hitting the wall,” that point in the race when the thighs are burning, the feet are aching and every joint and sinew cries out, “Just stop!” Getting past that wall is the key to finishing the race.

So it is with our faith. There will come a “wall” when the muscles and bones will scream at you, “Just give up!” When that moment comes, you must keep going — just like the faithful worthies in Hebrews chapter 11. They never gave up. Neither should you.

It's worth digging into the word translated “perseverance” in the Revised Standard Version. The word crops up over and over in the New Testament as a critical ingredient to growing faith for life. Here are just a few examples (all contain the same Greek word):

“By your endurance you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:19 ESV).

Endurance is critical to running the race of faith, and we are ultimately saved by our faith and God's grace.

“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 1:9 NASV).

After long years of reflection, John uses perseverance as a key summary

word of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1:2-4 NASV).

Like John, James picks perseverance as a critical ingredient of a complete life of faith.

The Greek word is *hupomeno*. In the King James, it is often translated “patience.” But the Greek word does not convey the ideas we usually associate with patience today — either slowly waiting for something to happen or being longsuffering under a long, extended trial. Strong’s Concordance puts it differently: “To undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere.” The root word (*meno*) is one we all know quite well. It is the word that Jesus uses at the Last Supper in his powerful final exhortation: **“Abide with me.”**

The real meaning of *hupomeno* is perfectly illustrated by the picture of Jesus going to the cross (shown here in a painting by Titian). He literally “bore up” the cross. Despite the crushing burden, he labored on, one foot in front of the other. God sent Simon to help him. But the picture is one of unwavering perseverance. This was Jesus’ marathon. He hit the wall, but he steadfastly kept going.

He did not quit.

James provides another powerful example to drive home his point on the importance of perseverance to a

life full of faith. He takes our minds straight back to Job.

“As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful” (Jas 5:10-11 NASV).

Many scholars consider Job the oldest book in the Bible. There is no way of knowing whether that is true, but there is at least one good reason to support this view. Human suffering is universal — across time and in every corner of the globe. But there is a reason for it (as discussed in Part 3). The purpose is to refine our faith like gold, each flame removing still more impurity.

The crowning virtue of Job’s faith was that he simply would not give up his faith in God. His wife taunted him to curse God and die. His three “friends” kept badgering him to “fess up” — he must be guilty of egregious sin to have suffered such an avalanche of suffering. Through it all, Job never



gave up. Such perseverance is what defines faith. James uses it as Exhibit A to inspire our faith to persevere (Jas 5:11 above).

Pioneer of Our Faith

When everything has been said about faith, one powerful exhortation remains: *Look to Jesus if you want your faith to persevere*. He is the pioneer and perfecter of persevering faith. When we are weary, look to him. When we feel crushed, look to him. When we feel alone, look to him. *Just like Jesus, we conquer when we have a faith that perseveres*.

The last week of Jesus' life is an extended lesson on perseverance. The week began with his full knowledge of what lay ahead. When the week began, Jesus explained to his Apostles what was coming in a cogent summary:

"As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem...he said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day'"
(Matt 20:17-19).

Jesus could not have been plainer. His pending death, however, did not so much as register with a single one. **But he never gave up!**

Not only did they not understand the horrible set of events about to unfold, but their minds were also selfishly focused entirely elsewhere. James and John illustrate the core problem:

"Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (Mark 10:37).

At some point, their mother joined in to further plead the case for her sons. Not surprisingly, the request from the Sons of Zebedee had a toxic effect on the rest of the Apostles:

"And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John" (Mark 10:41).

Jesus was walking a dry and dusty road to his certain death. The twelve were fighting among themselves. It was a very lonely walk for Jesus. **But he never gave up!**

The time came for Jesus to share his final meal with the Apostles. The infighting was still festering — even in the quiet confines of the Last Supper. Fully mindful of the squabble, Jesus began the evening with no words, just a powerful lesson. He washed their feet, a silent parable teaching them to love one another. Do you know what I have done to you? Still they squabbled, utterly blind to the shadow of the cross lengthening across his countenance. Worse, one of them was determined to betray him — that very night. The Apostles were extremely insensitive to their Lord Jesus. **But he never gave up!**

Finally, reaching Golgotha, he felt the searing pain of hands and feet being terribly nailed to the wood. He was stood upright — the long pole of wood dropped into the hole, jarring every nerve in his being. Parched, in pain and hearing the taunts of commoner and elite alike, Jesus looked to the heavens for his help.

Despising the shame, he endured the cross. **He never gave up!**

This is the champion to which we look. He perfected perseverance. At no point are we put to the test he endured. Yet his strength, his perseverance can be ours. That is what real faith does.

A Conqueror Be

Faith is ultimately about victory. That is the message John drives home in the verse with which this series began:

*“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our **faith**. Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5).*

After reflecting a lot on this passage, I’m left to wonder: Why was it John who brings us this powerful message? Perhaps it’s one of those nuggets that required a long time to fully comprehend and John, alone among the Apostles, had more time.

But I think there may be more to it. What if John struggled with regret? What if he spent many long moments recalling his petty antics leading up to Jesus’ death? What if John’s request to be seated in the Kingdom next to Jesus, with his brother James, stung when he laid it alongside Jesus’ suffering on the cross — a suffering he witnessed in person? Was a persevering faith in Jesus the real victory in overcoming John’s own weakness?

We cannot know. What we do know is that John is the author of Jesus’ final, resounding chorus in Revelation.

That refrain is all about the victory we gain when faith perseveres to the end. Be a conqueror! That is Jesus’ final call to us.

“The conqueror (nikon), I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also conquered (enikao), and sat down with my Father in His throne” (Rev 3:21 Diaglott).

Here’s our Greek friend *nike* once more — center stage in Jesus’ final refrain. We will conquer every obstacle in life if we gain victory the same way Jesus did it. **Jesus gained victory with a faith that persevered to the end.** The same is true for us. Jesus repeats this refrain seven times, with poetic simplicity and power. In every case, victory comes from a faith that perseveres (each verse from the Diaglott).

Ephesus. *“The Conqueror I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rev 2:7).*

Smyrna. *“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The Conqueror shall not be hurt by the second death” (Rev 2:10-11).*

Pergamum. *“To the Conqueror I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it” (Rev 2:17).*

Thyatira. *“The Conqueror who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the*

nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; and I will give him the morning star” (Rev 2:26-28).

Sardis. *“The Conqueror shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (Rev 3:5-6).*

Philadelphia. *“The Conqueror, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name” (Rev 3:12).*

Laodicea. *“The Conqueror, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev 3:21).*

The key is having the faith today that ensures we are there then. Jesus’ faith conquers every challenge and leads to eternal life — as it did for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all want this kind of faith. But things happen along the way. We grow weary. We get discouraged or feel defeated. We feel alone. We get distracted — with myriad distractions now in the very palm of our hand. We must conquer every obstacle with faith — an unswerving

trust that never quits. That is the only path to victory.

Conclusions

We need a faith that **grows** — a faith that bears a bountiful harvest of the Fruit of the Spirit. Such a faith knows every battle will be won — because the battle is the Lord’s. Such a faith knows calm in every storm — because things are not what they seem. Such a faith knows it will be tested — but realizes our trust in God is what truly saves us. Such a faith knows to persevere, since victory comes to those who overcome all through faith.

We need a Renaissance of Faith in our Community. This faith renewal must be focused on trusting God in a world ever more hostile to faith. As we grow faith together, we should be united by the victory we share — not riven by loss over endless debate on theology. Our faith must be a faith of the head, heart AND hands. It cannot be a “head-only” faith centered solely on doctrine. We should be confident in the storms around us — yet prepared to reach out to those whose faith wanes.

In his ministry, our Lord Jesus asked a probing question that has never held more meaning: When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth? We make the answer now. How we respond has never been more critical to our future.

*Mark Drabentstott
(Kansas City, MO)*

Notes:

1 All quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, unless indicated otherwise



History.

Conscientious Objection in North America

In part 11 Bro. Peter talks about Alternative Service after WW2.

Introduction

Those who I have talked with about their experiences as a CO during the Korean and Vietnam wars are few. We know from the records of the NIBSCO¹ that 89 Christadelphians served from 1952 through 1964, and about 75% of the same numbers were drafted in 1965-1972 as in that period. So I believe about 150 were in Alternative Service after WW2, particularly during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Of course the period of service was a fixed 2 years, which was shorter than the average in WW2, which was about 2.5 years, but highly variable and of uncertain duration. Also the conditions were far less

restrictive, being as the employment was civilian, usually only 40 hours Monday - Friday and paid (but poorly).

The draft and alternative service in the USA

Technically, the draft ended in 1947, only to be resumed in June 1948 after a 15-month hiatus. Those granted Conscientious Objector (CO) status in the draft were deferred until the Alternative Service system was organized in the summer of 1952. This was after the start of the Korean war, which began early in 1950, but which intensified after October 1950 when China entered the conflict. By the summer of 1951, when a new

draft bill was enacted, the need for additional troops was immense, and it was decided that continuing deferment of COs was no longer viable, so a form of alternative service was needed. The Civilian Public Service Camps of WW2 were rejected largely because the numbers of those deferred, about 12,000 in three years, were too small, and also the Historic Peace churches (Mennonites, Brethren, and particularly Quakers) were strongly opposed to any military involvement. So it was agreed to develop an alternative service program for COs.

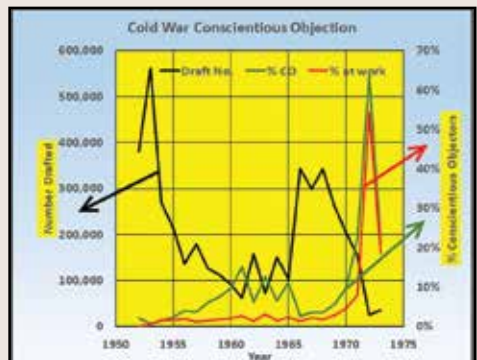
It took two years to get going, and in the end executive order 10238 was signed. In brief:²

“The regulations stipulated that objectors would be employed in government or nonprofit organizations that were primarily engaged in charitable, health, welfare, educational or scientific activities. They would not be allowed to work in profit-making businesses, nor could they remain in their own communities except in special instances when the local board decided that their present work served the national interest. They would be permitted to volunteer rather than having to wait for assignment by their local board. Even those who preferred to wait for a call from the draft board would be given some opportunity to choose the service they wished to perform. In most instances, the procedures for individual COs would be as follows. The

objector would submit to his local board three types of work he was interested in. If the board found anyone of these choices acceptable, it would assign him to it and place him (as a CO).”

So, beginning in the middle of 1953, around when the Korean Armistice was signed, suitable non-profit work had to be found. There was some difficulty in this initially, but then the economy boomed, slots opened, and in the end COs had a choice — but it could not be near home.

The cold war era saw a great increase in the number claiming CO status, especially compared to the two world wars. In both WW1 and WW2, the percent claiming CO status was only about 0.15%. As can be seen in the chart, the percentage rose to about 10% after the Korean war, and rose to 65% during the final years of the Vietnam war. The chart also shows the number of draftees: the spikes during the two “hot” wars is noticeable.³ Interestingly, although about 10% of those drafted during 1960-65 were granted CO status, only about 2% were called to do alternative service, as we shall discuss



later. The Vietnam war conflict escalated rapidly in 1965, but the stalemate around 1968 caused a large increase in opposition to the war. The reduction in percentage performing alternative service around 1965 is probably due to the lag between a draft date, and the actual obtaining of CO status, which is often more than a year. And after 1966, most of those obtaining CO status actually did alternative service.

More than 80% of the COs (and the vast majority of Christadelphians) found themselves working in hospitals, many in mental institutions. It was not easy work, as well as being low-paying, and even so several States circumvented the law and paid less than minimum wage, which itself was only about \$35 per week (\$350 today). But at least it was civilian work, five days a week, and usually the brethren could find work near an ecclesia. Their wives could also join them, if they were married, so on the whole the two-year period was not unpleasant. It was a great improvement on the primitive isolated camps of WW2, and it was for a defined time, so few complaints about the experience were heard. Better than the alternative, which was often the brutality of infantry service in Korea, or later Vietnam.

Before the Boards

Many different experiences before the draft boards were reported: some endured a strict grilling about their faith, but several breezed through when they mentioned "Christadelphian". And quite a few experienced strict scrutiny by the FBI after refusal from their local draft

board, although the FBI ceased this after 1967 and the Selective Service itself investigated instead.

It is therefore not entirely surprising that local boards, some of which were biased towards rejection, found quite a few Christadelphians ineligible for CO status, although usually their cases before the appeal boards were successful. On several occasions, however, their applications were rejected at this stage: only if one of the three members dissented could a further appeal be made to the next step, which was a "Presidential Appeal". I do not have many records, but I know several were successful at the Presidential Appeal level: however, I know of a least two Christadelphians who failed at either the appeal level or the Presidential level, and were imprisoned for their conscience.

FBI investigations

It seems almost unbelievable the amount of effort that was expended in investigating the validity of the convictions of those appealing for CO status. As far as I can tell, the FBI interviewed several neighbors, investigated school records, checked with several friends, and sometimes, but not always, talked to any named references. Any school discipline incidents, like fights, were investigated, alcohol consumption (if any) was recorded, and in general the applicant's life was put under a moral microscope. These were young men of about eighteen, and how many of us can look back at our conduct in the years before that age, and not recall any unseemly episodes?

A sample⁴ showed that, at least in one (non-Christadelphian) case, the FBI

interviewed perhaps 12 or so people: seven neighbors or friends, two present or former employers, several at his schools, and several pastors of his churches. The report ran to almost 2,000 words, and the only negative items were one punch at school, after much incitement, and a suspicion of “hot-rodding” a vehicle.

An investigation of one (unbaptized) Christadelphian found more to criticize: one fight, a few beers consumed, and a somewhat poor school and employment record, but many of his friends commended him as a devout religious boy, often quoting Bible passages.

Both were granted the desired exemption from any military service, as were most of those Christadelphians who went through this experience.

It seems clear that the FBI investigations essentially ignored the question of baptized or not, and instead focused on interviewing neighbors and those who knew the individual at school, including an examination of his school record.

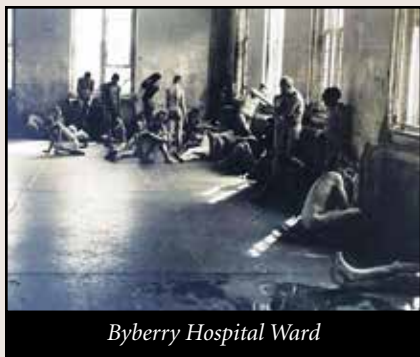
The experiences

Harold Lafferty received his draft notice in 1950, and passed his physical exam, so had to appeal to obtain CO status, which required obtaining form SSS-150, as it was known. There was difficulty in obtaining it: he had to visit the local Selective Service office, and see the colonel in charge, who reluctantly gave him the precious document. This was submitted, but as expected the local draft board refused to grant CO status. He appealed,

and this provoked the FBI enquiries among his friends, neighbors, work colleagues, and ecclesial members. He had made it known where he worked that he was going to apply for CO status, and this caused problems: his ultimate superior was one of those interviewed by the FBI, and his disdain for COs caused Harold to be fired. In the end, the FBI report was favorable, and Harold was granted his CO status, but his termination caused him grief. In the end, of course, Alternative Service had not yet started, but Harold spent the next four years unable to plan for the future, expecting to be called each month.

Ken Sommerville was drafted and appeared before his local board on September 13, 1955. Refused CO status, he appealed, and the FBI investigated. His appeal was heard on Jan 20, 1956, where he was accompanied by his father. The FBI investigation makes interesting reading: any reported slight misdeeds were probed, and at least 13 individuals were interviewed, which must have taken several days. In any case, his appeal was accepted, and on October 2, 1956 he started work at the Philadelphia State Hospital (Byberry), a mental institution, almost exactly 100 miles away from his home. This was a notorious institution, and the experiences of the COs here ultimately caused great changes to this, and similar, mental hospitals.

Ken spent a year in an environment that was very difficult for both the patients and those serving them.



Byberry Hospital Ward

Shown above is an example of a ward at Byberry. The ward that Ken served in was for incontinent patients.

He recounted an episode during his service in *The Tidings*, Dec 2010.

David Williams. This is his account, slightly edited.

“Appearing before the draft board was an ordeal, I was very nervous and I had to appear before it myself. Looking back it was probably good for me, and the board in general were very courteous to me, although they denied me CO status and told me I would have to go before the Appeal board, this involved being examined by the FBI, although the local board told me they would go with the decision the Appeal board made. A couple of things stick in my mind regarding the FBI investigation. First, they interviewed my neighbors, my teachers at high school, my employer, my high school pals, but to the best of my knowledge, never interviewed any Christadelphians. Their purpose, as one of my friends told me, was to see if my manner of life was consistent with being a

conscientious objector. Second, they just weren’t interested from my baptism on, they were especially interested in my teen years. Bro. John Wilson (our recording brother) and myself appeared before the Appeal board and they gave me a favorable decision, and a few months later the local board granted me a 1/0 (CO) classification.

“I worked in a hospital, the Good Samaritan Hospital Vincennes Indiana, 1955-57. The first six months as an orderly on a men’s ward, and during hours I was not working the hospital trained me to be an operating room technician, so the last year and a half I worked in the operating room assisting doctor’s operations. Among other things, my last duty each day was to mop all the operating room floors and the hall floor.”

During the Vietnam war era, there seemed to be more choice of locations and occupations: some worked in Goodwill locations, at least one as assistant to a Catholic priest, and others in similarly diverse occupations. And, in general, those who experienced alternative service found it an acceptable service, especially compared to the rigors of service in Vietnam. The concern about the service board and the potential of an investigation of their behavior as a teenager was of as great a concern as the actual required service, which was essentially a two year, very low paid, interruption of their lives.

In several cases, brethren went through all the trauma of appearing

before the local board, successfully appealing, being granted CO status, but never heard anything more, so they lived in suspended status for years, fearing the call to report, but never receiving it. This is clear from the chart above: during 1960-65, only about 20% of those granted CO status ever did alternative service.

After the Draft

With the end of the draft in 1973, much of our focus on military service has slowly dwindled. There has been no Military Service Committee among the Amended in the USA since about the mid-1990s, although “The New England Christadelphian Religious Conscientious Objection Committee” issued a CD in 2003. The Unamended have been more active: they last issued their information CD in 2013, and Bro. Harold Thomas still occasionally posts. In Canada, the Military Service committee has also been dormant, although Bro Martin Webster is still a contact. In the UK, on the other hand, their Military Service Committee is still quite active, planning a National Awareness Day for Sept. 19, 2020. It has expanded its area of interest to include advising applicants for asylum in the UK, and expressing an opinion on cremation.

Summary

The involvement of Christadelphians with wars in North America has extended over 100 years: from the Civil war to the failure of the war in Vietnam, the draft in the United States has been in force for about 35 of those years, and during all that time statistics show that Christadelphians have been one of the most consistent denominations in opposing any form of military service. In WW1, this came with a great price, both in the United States and Canada, as all those drafted became subject to military discipline: at least one died in prison as a direct result. And in WW2, the brethren were banished to primitive camps, often thousands of miles from home, and, in the case of the United States, had to pay for this incarceration. Two also died during that conflict. We must be grateful for their sacrifice, and although Military Service seems to have faded from the awareness of most, we should be prepared at all times to make an answer for our faith. We should also remember the scrutiny that many underwent as the authorities made exhaustive enquiries into their behavior, going back many years, as we advise our young people, male and female alike, to conduct themselves in appropriate ways.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

- 1 National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors: now the Center for Conscience and War
- 2 This is taken from Larson, An Unbroken Witness: Conscientious Objection To War, 1948-1953. By Zelle Andrews, a Ph D thesis on the Internet
- 3 The Data is from the Semi-annual report of the Selective Service, Jan-June 1973, appendix 12. (Available on Google Books).
- 4 Search Internet for “FBI_Investigates_Conscientious_Objector.pdf”



Community.

BIBLE MISSION

News from the CBMA and the CBMC

Baptizing Individuals. Building Ecclesias.

“SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!”

Bro. Jerry Hirst (San Francisco Ecclesia) and I recently made a trip to Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) at the end of February, right about the time the Coronavirus concern was ramping up. Earlier, we had considered not going, but at the time, there were few cases reported in the US and none in T&T. Upon our arrival, however, we got quite a surprise in an email from the local CBMTT committee. We were told that the fraternal gathering and CBMTT business meeting were both canceled, and that we should “abort” our trip. This was not a bad idea under the circumstances, but the only problem was, we were already

there! The email had been sent while we were in the air on our way to T&T. So, we prayed about it and decided to “shelter in place” at the hotel for a couple of days.

When Sunday arrived, the two of us planned to have a memorial, but to our great surprise and joy, a young brother and sister (David and Kezia Edwards) decided to come join us for prayer, reading, and partaking of the emblems! Afterwards, we enjoyed their fellowship over lunch and a scenic drive into the hills. This visit and support from a faithful young couple truly lifted our spirits!

In addition, by the end of that Sunday, we were invited to come to two of the



Bro. Brad Butts and Bro. Jerry Hirst visiting the Erin Ecclesia in Trinidad.

ecclesias we had been planning to visit. So, on Monday morning, off we went to the pleasant island of Tobago. We were there for only two days, but while there, Bro. Jerry was able to prerecord the Sunday morning radio talk for use on the following Sunday. His topic was “How to cope with fear in these troubling times,” which was certainly appropriate. We were also able to attend an important AB meeting, give a Bible Class on Tuesday, and visit a disabled brother, and a disabled sister. A number of members from Mt. Grace stopped by to see us or gave us a call, while we were at the guest house.

On Wednesday, we headed back to Trinidad and traveled to the far south of that island where the Erin ecclesia is located. The Edoo family once again provided the transportation from the airport to Erin, a round trip of 4–6 hours, depending on traffic. This ecclesia has been the focal point of much CBMC assistance through the years, since many of the members are either unemployed or underemployed. Truth Corps was able to visit a few years ago which was a highlight for both the Erin Ecclesia and the TC.

I have always been impressed with this ecclesia's efforts to preach the Word to their friends and teach the children of family and friends, under the direction of Bro. Sheriff Edoo, the Recorder, and Sister Nesha Edoo, his daughter in law. At the moment they are discussing first principles with 5 adults, and a couple more are good possibilities. Sis. Nesha works tirelessly with the children, keeping a weekly Sunday School afloat.

Speaking of the children, these kids with their beaming smiles, attended every Bible class and meeting that took place during our visit. There was an evening Bible presentation every night, in addition to the Sunday Memorial Service. Bro. Jerry got the children excited about the new Coronavirus appropriate greeting. At our first meeting with them, Bro. Jerry held his arms open wide with a big smile and said, “So happy to see you!” and then immediately extended a forearm bump to finish the greeting. The children were so taken with this that they greeted us the same way for the rest of the week!

(Continued on Page 251)

Letters to the Editor

The Better Angels of Our Nature

Brother Peter,

I enjoyed your thought-provoking editorial in the Feb, 20020 issue on the “The Better Angels of our Nature”, a book by Stephen Pinker. People like Steven Pinker, with their chosen worldviews, have no other choice but to see the world through rose-colored spectacles. Without that optimism, they are forced to accept the world as it really is — broken, desperately evil (by any standard!), and crying for salvation, a realization that would abrogate the vaunted humanist project. (Although, to some extent, this has already been accepted: hence the proliferation of post-modern thought in Western society.)

I read a review by British Philosopher and atheist John Gray that demolishes Pinker’s book. In his concluding remarks, he compares the use of statistics, algorithms and advanced analytics to show an ever-improving humanity to the use of the thoroughly unscientific Tibetan prayer wheel serving “to give succor to the spiritually needy”, a particularly devastating criticism.

As much as Pinker is on the optimistic side of the fence, there are others who share his Godless worldview, who “know the score” and have come to terms with it. Jonathan Franzen represents that view wonderfully in his September *New Yorker* piece, “What If We Stopped Pretending?” In the face of perceived impending global catastrophic climate change,

he confesses despair and belief in human inability to stop what is widely thought to be coming. Dismissing the optimistic view, he writes,

“If your hope for the future depends on a wildly optimistic scenario, what will you do ten years from now, when the scenario becomes unworkable even in theory? Give up on the planet entirely? To borrow from the advice of financial planners, I might suggest a more balanced portfolio of hopes, some of them longer-term, most of them shorter. It’s fine to struggle against the constraints of human nature, hoping to mitigate the worst of what’s to come, but it’s just as important to fight smaller, more local battles that you have some realistic hope of winning. Keep doing the right thing for the planet, yes, but also keep trying to save what you love specifically — a community, an institution, a wild place, a species that’s in trouble — and take heart in your small successes. Any good thing you do now is arguably a hedge against the hotter future, but the really meaningful thing is that it’s good today. As long as you have something to love, you have something to hope for.”

In the face of admitted hopelessness, his great epiphany boils down to simply redefining hope — to think smaller, and more locally. In that way, says he, we can live meaningfully.

Many passages of Scripture are applicable here, but two spring readily to mind:

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23).

“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4)

Your brother by Grace,

Dan Langston (Moorestown, NJ)

Conscientious Objection in North America (Part 10)

Brother Bro. Peter,

On page 139 of the March 2020 issue there is a picture with four religious objectors (of which I am one... Charles.)

Here is the correction: Charles Munn in mistakenly listed being with the three Link boys. It is not Charles Munn. It is Brother Roy Dunn. Roy was such a good, faithful Brother that he deserves recognition for the seven months that he spent in jail before being sent to the Luray Camp on the Skyline Drive in Virginia where we Link boys joined with him.

This is not to say that Charlie Munn does not deserve recognition too, but he was not in the camp with we Link boys and Roy Dunn. Neither was he in the Spring Grove Hospital where we were subsequently sent.

Charlie Link (Moorestown, NJ)

BIBLE MISSION

(Continued from Page 247)

And as a side note, some of you may remember the photo of a little girl named Prya which was included with an earlier article. She had experienced eye surgery and kidney problems at a young age. The kidney issue had retarded her physical growth. Well, not anymore! She is now 12 years old and has grown so tall that I did not even recognize her at first! Turns out that she is responding well to her kidney medication and God's good care. What a joy to see!

As usual, we gained spiritual strength from our Brothers and Sisters in T&T while trying to be of some support to them. By God's grace, both were accomplished, and Bro. Jerry and I were able to return to the States on our regularly scheduled flights. The only question was, would our wives (both retired nurses) let us back into the house? We envisioned the possibility of being quarantined in a tent out in the back yard for at least 14 days! Happily, that was not necessary.

Seriously though, we hope that this virus crisis is a sign that our Lord's return is eminent. The return of the great physician will heal so many ills within the brotherhood, as well as without. May our Brethren in the mission field along with us not only keep the faith, but have that precious Hope grow in our hearts as we see these things come to pass.

*Brad Butts
(Denver, CO)*

Community.

NEWS & UPDATES

BALTIMORE, MD

On Sunday, September 29, 2019, in the presence of many brothers, sisters and children from both the Washington and Baltimore Ecclesias, we witnessed the baptisms of JEFFREY and JENNIFER KREIDER. Convinced by the power of the Scripture, after a long and careful search, they left a conservative Mennonite community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to embrace hope in the coming kingdom of God. It is awesome to witness how God is calling out of the nations a people for His name. The Kreiders bring to the ecclesia so much warmth and enthusiasm!

We're really happy to be able to include the news that Jeff and Jenn's daughter, TINA KREIDER,



Sis. Tina Kreider is baptised on a cold day

was baptized on Friday, March 27, 2020 to the backdrop of a global pandemic and the Pennsylvania Governor issuing emergency stay at home measures that would within hours prohibit the occasion. Tina's



Bro. Nathanel Thomas is baptised in the Jordan River

determination to recognize God's power to save was a testimony to all who witnessed her baptism by live streaming.

On April 8, 2019, NATHANAEL THOMAS was baptized in the waters of the Jordan River, Israel. This was one of the happiest days for his mother, Sis. Shawn. She fell asleep on Friday, July 19, 2019. We joined with many brothers and sisters and friends from near and far to remember Shawn, her unquenchable zeal for Christ and her tireless service here in Baltimore. She was buried at Meadowridge Cemetery. Her family made the journey from New Hampshire. They witnessed our love for Shawn, and how much we care for Rachel, Nathanael and Seth.

At very short notice we planned an exceedingly happy event. After 15 years of marriage, and six children later, Bro.

Ebengo and Sis. Safarani had a beautiful wedding ceremony on August 10, 2019. The Catonsville Ecclesia allowed us to use their lovely chapel for the service. Bro. Bill Link performed the ceremony and the children all took part with their parents. Many brothers and sisters attended from both the Baltimore and Washington meetings. The reception was held afterward at the Link's home. It was the balance we, as an ecclesia, needed after losing Sis. Shawn.

On Tuesday August 20, 2019, our most senior member, Sis. Lois Hulbert, fell asleep at age ninety-six. We came together as an ecclesia to remember the faithful life of Aunt Lois. Her daughter, Sis. Jane Hewitson, along with Bro. Mark, were sterling examples to us in their care of Sis. Lois at their home.

In March 2019, Bro. John and Sis. Rachel Perks from Ottawa, ON



Bro. Ebengo and Sis. Safarani and family

traveled to Baltimore for our Spring Study Weekend. Bro. John gave moving and insightful classes on, “The Five Widows of Luke’s Gospel”.

On August 7, 2019, Bro. Sam and Sis. Audrey Van Reuter welcomed their first child, Elias Matthew. A few months later, on December 4, 2019, Bro. Joshua and Sis. Anna welcomed their first child, Theodore William Jack Hewitson. These two little boys have already brought us so much joy! We ask God’s richest blessing on their lives.

In October, 2019, Bro. Mark and Sis. Anita Vincent joined us from the Stirling, UK Ecclesia. Bro. Mark presented powerful classes on the topic, “Full Assurance of Faith”. Bro. Chris Wubbels (Rockford, IL) gave a talk on the role the Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation has taken to help build up faith in North America. The classes were

well supported by local ecclesias as well as long time interested friends including a Bible seminar student we first met in the late 1990’s. Sunday, October 20, 2019, was the Baltimore-Washington Gathering, and Bro. Mark Vincent continued his classes on having a “Full Assurance of Faith”.

Carol Link

MOORESTOWN, NJ

We’re happy to inform you that the Moorestown Ecclesia has a new Recording Brother. May God bless our Brother Dave Cheetham in his work in the Master’s vineyard. Bro. Dave can be contacted by phone at: 856-273-3654 or by email at: dnacheetham@gmail.com.

Steve Cheetham



Photo by Sis. Julie Snobelen (Bedford Ecclesia - Nova Scotia, Canada)

Please send in news and notices by the 1st of the preceding month and include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.

Email to tidings.publisher@gmail.com or submit online at www.tidings.org.

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

A photograph of three young women laughing and looking down at something they are holding together. The image is tinted with a warm, yellowish-orange color.

Community.

FOR THE CALENDAR

MAY, 2020

All known May events have been **Cancelled**

JUNE, 2020

19-21 New York Metropolitan Sisters Retreat has been **Cancelled**.

27-July 5 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School has been **Cancelled**.

27-July 4 Great Lakes Christadelphian Bible School has been **Cancelled**.

JULY, 2020

5-11 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School has been **Cancelled**.

11-18 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp Speakers are Bro. Steve Mansfield, (South Australia) on "Barnabas - The Encourager", and Bro. Jeff Johnson (South Australia) on "Christ - Son of the Living God."

11-19 Midwest Bible School at Trine University in Angola, IN. Bro. Roger Lewis, (Christchurch, NZ) "*Zerubbabel- My Servant*," Bro. Mark O'Grady, (Tawa, NZ) "*Elisha*" and Bro. Tim Badger, (Brighton, AUS) "*I Will Be with You – Exhortations from the Book of Joshua*"

19-26 Idyllwild Bible School for the 65th year at Idyllwild Pines Camp in Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Arne Roberts, (Dunstable, UK) "*Wholly Holy*," Bro. Ken Styles (Royal Oak, MI) "*The Blessing of Forgiveness*," Bro. Nathan Lewis, (Christchurch, NZ) on a topic not yet announced. Register online at www.californiabibleschool.org

20-26 46th Annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering has been **Cancelled**.

25-August 1 Christadelphian Bible Camp at Manitoulin Island. Bro. Everett Muniz (Paris Ave., OH) "Holiness: The High Calling of God in Christ Jesus." and Bro. Jeff Johnson (Glenlock, Australia) "Building the Ecclesia of God". More details on www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Mike Keene at manitoulinmaincamp@gmail.com

26-August 1 Western Christadelphian Bible School at the Menucha Camp and Conference Center in Corbett, OR. Bro. Luke Barratt (Portland, OR), Bro. Mark Drabenstott (Kansas City, MO), and Bro. Maurice Green (Barnet, London, UK). Register at www.wcbsretreat.com.

AUGUST, 2020

2-8 Rogue River Bible School Bro. David Wisniewski (Brant County, ON) "*The Garden: Revelation and Restoration*;" Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Victoria, BC) "*Developing Faith*;" Bro. Stephen Mansfield (Adelaide, AU) "*Prayer: Looking Vertically in a Horizontal World*". For registration information, contact Sis. Pat Posey at: patlposey@gmail.com.

17-22 Lakefield Bible School in Lakewood, ON. Bro. Caleb Lawrence (Cambridge, ON) "*Minor Characters - Major Faith*"; Bro. Stephen Snobelen (Bedford, NS) "*Biblical Perspectives on the Environment*". www.lakefieldbibleschool.com

SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE...

News from the Spanish Influenza of 1918-1919

WINNIPEG, MB Owing to the ban on all public meetings on account of the influenza epidemic, we have had to cancel all meetings at our hall until the ban is lifted. We met for breaking of bread the past two Sunday at the homes of brethren who live outside the city limits.

*Will J. Turner,
(The Christadelphian, 1919 p. 45-46.)*

BRANTFORD, ON Meetings prohibited for several weeks owing to influenza.

H. W. Styles

HAMILTON, ON On account of the Spanish influenza epidemic, we have been requested by the Health authorities to close all meetings indefinitely.

OCTOBER, 2020

10-11 Vancouver Ecclesial Fraternal Gathering held at the Vancouver Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Daffyd Jenkins (Museum Place, Cardiff, Wales, UK) "*The Stone*". For registration information, contact Bro. Phil Snobelen at: philsnobelen@shaw.ca.

BUFFALO, NY We have had a little trouble through the influenza epidemic, which necessitated the closing of the halls for a short period. However, things are now running smoothly, and we continue preaching the truth.

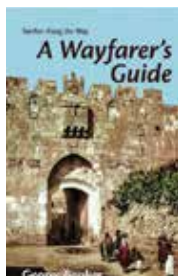
*A. Copping,
(The Christadelphian, 1919 p. 191)*

BALTIMORE, MD This dreadful visitation, the Spanish influenza, which has been and is still ravaging this country and Europe, has claimed its toll in human victims; it has been "no respecter of persons," has not spared the rich nor poor, the old or young, male nor female, those out of the faith, or in the faith. It is our sad duty to report the death of two members of our Ecclesia who were stricken by the disease and died within a few days of each other, namely, Bro. Louis A. Counselman, aged 32 years, and his wife, Alma, aged 25 years. May they be able to give a good account of their work and stand approved before the Master. At that time the disease was at its height, men were dying by thousands. We miss them both very much, as they were very attentive to their ecclesial duties.

(The Advocate, 1919 p. 27).

***In the UK, 3 deaths recorded
during 1918, and 11 during 1919.
In the USA 7 during 1919.***

Books by *The Tidings*



Farther Along the Way: A Wayfarer's Guide by *George Booker*

A resource for fellow travelers on the Way of Life: word studies, insights into details of Scripture, perspectives on difficult questions, and analogies that relate to the spiritual life. Published: Jan 2018 - \$9.00 USD (301 pages).

Little Words by *John C. Bilello*

Explore the meanings of key Bible words, their subtleties of meaning and their applications to our walk in Christ. Published: May 2017 \$8.00 USD (278 pages).

CAIN — His Life and Legacy by *Matt Harrison*

Probes the lessons of Cain and his time before the Flood and explores questions Bible students have long asked. \$5.00 USD (106 pages).

On the Way: Bible Studies, Exhortations, Meditations and Musings by *George Booker*

Insights, reflections, practical issues, difficult passages, personal observations and more to uplift and encourage all those “on the Way”. \$9.00 USD (309 pages).

Observations along the Way, A Bible Journal by *George Booker*

A sequel to “on the Way”. An album of a spiritual journey, offering encouragement and food for thought to fellow travelers along the Way to the Kingdom. \$9.00 USD (305 pages).

The Ecclesia at Ephesus by *Ryan Mutter*

Studying the Ecclesia at Ephesus provides powerful lessons in spiritual growth relevant in today's times. \$3.00 USD (264 pages).

Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage by *John C. Bilello*

Sound, proactive, Biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage. \$6.00 USD (127 pages).

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis by *David Levin*

Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of the first five chapters. \$12.00 USD (364 pages).

Pictures of Redemption by *George Booker*

Explores parables, analogies, and figures of speech used in Scripture to illustrate the many facets of redemption. \$6.00 USD (192 pages).

ORDER ONLINE at www.tidings.org

(Prices do not include Shipping - You will be invoiced for the amount due)

Thoughts on the Way

Don't Stop Studying the Bible

There is a tendency among newly baptized believers to suppose that they have passed the test and graduated, and now they can relax. This is a poor attitude. Baptism is not the end — it is the beginning. Continuing serious Bible study is essential, to consolidate what we have already learned. Part of such study is the fundamentals. If we want to be preachers and teachers of God's Word, we will need to keep up first principles study, in one form or another, all of our lives.

But there should also be a gradual changeover, to some extent, into general Bible study. This will have the effect of increasing Bible understanding as a whole. This study will also strengthen our initial beliefs based on first principles verses. Why is this so? Because the more we study the Bible as a whole, the better we will understand the context of those single-verse proofs. And the better we will see the Bible as a consistent and logical whole: it is truly God's revelation to mankind, and the story of our salvation.

Approaches to Bible study

1. First of all, make up your own mind to be a Bible student! No half-hearted intention will ever produce any good result.
2. Use marginal references to trace New Testament quotations back to the Old Testament. When you do so, then take some time to read the Old Testament context carefully; you will invariably learn something new and helpful.
3. Ask yourself questions. But don't expect all the answers right away! (This requires, incidentally and beneficially, healthy doses of humility and patience.)
4. "Where'er you look within this book, five things observe with care: Of whom it speaks, and how it speaks, and why, and when, and where."
5. Put parallel narratives together: not just the four gospels, but also Kings with Chronicles, and the Old Testament psalms and prophets with their respective historical contexts. Parallel narratives that are identical tell us something, perhaps about the source. Likewise, parallel narratives that differ to some degree are each providing supplementary details for one another.
6. Always ask: What does this remind me of? Look for patterns; that is, ideas that repeat themselves. But don't get "carried away" by your own clever ideas.
7. Use your imagination. Fill out the Bible picture, while using

common sense and experience. This will help you to see the Bible as a real story about real people!

8. Take the Bible as plainly meaning what it says, unless it gives you a good reason for taking it otherwise.
9. Trace an argument or a theme throughout an entire section of Scripture.
10. Lastly, always be willing to admit that you may be mistaken, and that you still have much to learn.

Study tools

1. **Concordances:** These have two good uses and one bad one. The bad use is to string together a list of passages containing the same English word, with no regard for setting or original Hebrew and Greek, and call the result a Bible study. The good uses: (a) to find a passage, for which almost any concordance is good enough; and (b) to group together and analyze the uses of a particular Greek or Hebrew word, for which Young's, Strong's, and other lexicons are useful. However, in the latter case, note that the same Hebrew or Greek word can have multiple meanings.
2. **Bible dictionaries and specialized books about Bible geography and customs:** These books have multiplied in the last generation, due to the work of archaeologists, textual scholars and historians — dedicated people who have “opened up” the land of the Bible and the background history of its people. But many of the newer ones are influenced by false doctrines and a skeptical view of the Inspiration of the scriptures.
3. **Bible commentaries:** The older ones (Victorian and early 20th century) are best for devotionals and Bible lessons, because these writers truly believed the Bible; but don't let their “doctrines” mislead you. The newer ones are best for Bible background.
4. **Christadelphian commentaries:** Before reading what someone else has to say about a portion of the Bible, make sure you are familiar with the passage by doing your own background work. Then, and only then, should you read other Christadelphian writers. And don't think that, because the writer is a Christadelphian, he or she will invariably be right. Read whatever you wish, compare it with scriptures (Acts 17:11), and make up your own mind.
5. **Wide-margin Bibles and Bible marking:** These can be a good idea, but don't let this enterprise leave you enslaved to someone else's interpretations. Always be prepared to change your mind if other evidence points in another direction. Comments made in indelible ink might soon be regretted! Bible study is a continuous learning experience, or it simply isn't study.

George Booker

TIDINGS



Our New Editor begins next month!

Bro. Dave Jennings, of the Verdugo Hills Ecclesia in Southern California has been working as Associate Editor for the past year. He takes the reins with the June 2020 issue as Bro. Peter Hemingray steps down after a decade of service.

We look forward to the new energy and exciting vision that Bro. Dave brings to The Tidings. He plans to share articles and news items that are practical and relevant to our community through a team of section editors. Lord willing, Dave plans to add new sections on Music and Praise, First Principles and Life Application. He is also focused on developing a more interactive website and social media communications to foster interaction with brothers and sisters.

The Tidings Committee is dedicated to increasing the faith of individuals and ecclesias by creating and distributing valued content on spiritual matters and thus glorifying God as a unified community. We invite you to get engaged. We value your contributions in the form of articles, photos, news updates, ideas, feedback and prayers.

We pray that our Heavenly Father will bless Bro. Dave's efforts to serve our community in these Last Days.



To make a donation or to subscribe, visit us at
WWW.TIDINGS.ORG

Stay connected and up to date. Find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!



The Brothers and Sisters who write for The Christadelphian Tidings do so on a voluntary basis, and the Magazine is provided FREE to any who would like to read it. The Magazine is available in a Digital Format online at www.tidings.org.

If you would like to order a printed subscription to The Tidings you may do so simply by making a donation to help cover the printing costs. The Suggested Donation approximates the actual cost of printing and shipping which is US\$50.00, and Minimum Donation is US\$25.00. If you can afford to donate more, please do so in order to help out those that cannot afford to.

The Christadelphian Tidings of the Kingdom of God

Periodicals postage paid at Austin, Texas and at additional mailing offices.

Send address corrections to: The Christadelphian Tidings • 567 Astorian Drive • Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941