

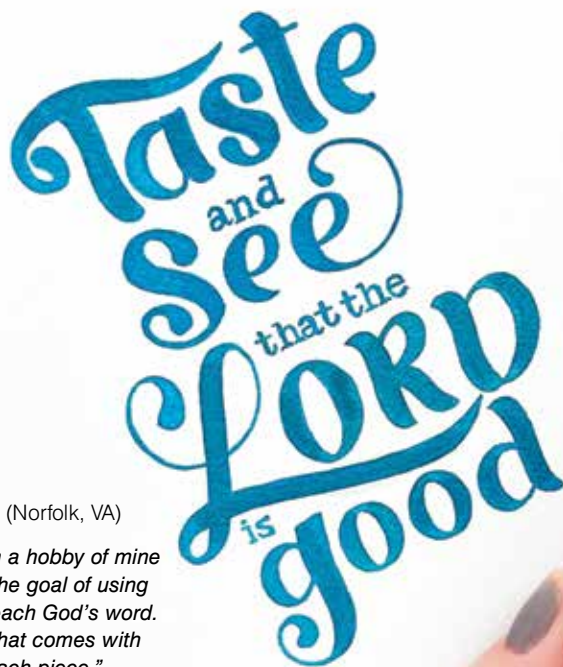
TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 2, February 2021

THE VIRTUOUS HUSBAND

Virtue in action is goodness, moral excellence,
integrity, purity, courtesy, honesty, kindness,
faithfulness, humility, sensitivity
and all acts of good report.





Taste
and
See
that the
LORD
is
good

By: Sis. Kate McKee (Norfolk, VA)

"Calligraphy has been a hobby of mine for a few years, with the goal of using my art as a tool to preach God's word. I love the meditation that comes with the slow creation of each piece."

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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Volume 84, Number 2 / February, 2021



IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial — Commandments of Our Lord	56
Life Application — The Virtuous Husband, <i>Charles Link, Sr.</i>	59
Consolation and Exhortation — How to Neutralize Bitterness, <i>Sam Taylor</i>	64
Music and Praise — In Harmony, <i>Juliana K. Anderson</i>	67
Exposition — Avoiding Bias, <i>Richard Morgan</i>	72
— Everyone Did That Which Was Right in His Own Eyes, <i>Neil Robin</i>	74
First Principles — The Rich Man, Lazarus and Abraham (4), <i>Steven Cox</i>	81
— Job and Satan, <i>Ken Sommerville</i>	85
Take a Marginal Note — Cut Off the Blood Supply to Sin, <i>Dave Jennings</i>	90
Letter to the Editor — Tarshish, <i>Trevor Hansen</i>	91
Preaching and Teaching — Costa Rica Gathering, <i>David Collister</i>	94
— The Garden Project, <i>Analiese Beeler</i>	97
Ecclesial News	99

COMMANDMENTS OF OUR LORD

By Dave Jennings

*“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,
he it is that loveth me.”*

WHAT uniquely binds us together as a global body of believers is our Statement of Faith. This list of First Principle teachings, along with the Doctrines to Be Rejected and the Commandments of Christ, serve to unite us, transcending the passage of time as well as national and cultural differences. They represent teachings that can be broadly supported throughout the Bible and are not excised from one or two obscure passages. Our community upholds that these are the basis of knowledge that can lead to salvation.

One would not be surprised to learn that the Statement of Faith and Doctrines to Be Rejected were specifically intended to differentiate Christadelphian believers from false teachings prevalent in Christendom.

The same is also true for the Commandments of Christ. How we apply what we believe has always been viewed as critically important. It too is a differentiator for Christadelphians, as we attempt to follow the principles of primitive Christianity. Our behavior demonstrates what we believe. As Bro. Roberts wrote in the Ecclesial Guide, “Christian’ has become inexpressive, as the definition of a true believer. A Christian, in the first century, was one who received the doctrine of Christ as apostolically expounded, and who made the commandments of Christ the rule of his life.”¹

The Commandments of Christ have commonly been given as a baptismal gift or to Sunday school scholars. One version lists 53 commands and another catalogs 100. Of these two, the

shorter version has long been a staple in Christadelphian worship. It was surmised that the shorter version may have coincided with the number of Sundays per year, with one being read during Memorial Service each week.

The commandments of our Lord instruct us about how we are to behave as men and women who share a common belief of the First Principles. They are, without doubt, the yardstick of measurement for who we are and what we must become. It was these commandments on how to live that left his disciples astonished and searching for greater faith. For the First Principles to have power in our lives, it is a necessity to adhere to the commandments of our Lord in the way we interact with one another and the world around us. This may be the best way for us to publicly display our love and honor of the Lord.

It is interesting to note that of the 53 commandments, nearly 20 deal with how we handle conflict. In a world that progressively has no moral compass for handling conflict or differences, the teachings of our Lord have never been more useful. Our Lord instructs us to do things that are unnatural for our flesh. Bless them that curse you (Luke 6:28). Agree with your adversary quickly, submitting even to wrong for the sake of peace (Matt 5:25). Trust that God is in control of all facets of our lives. A commitment to these principles is the roadway to true unity in our community and our personal lives.

A commitment to these principles is the roadway to true unity in our community and our personal lives.

Solving differences in a Christ-like manner has been a challenge to all ages. Bro. Islip Collier wrote a wonderful article about controversy and conflict in 1924. In his article (later captured in *Principles and Proverbs*), he reminded all believers that if we would “saturate our minds with the clear principles stated and reiterated in the Word, it might put an end to nearly all the destructive disputing, merely by removal of unnecessary provocation.” Further, he commented on how easy it is for us to deceive ourselves into thinking that unrighteous and unjust extremes are simply evidence for one’s zeal for the truth.²

There is an interesting case study on how a major church, the Worldwide Church of God, eventually fragmented.³ Many of the problems that surfaced in the 1970s were largely about doctrinal issues. However, it was how they dealt with the debates and dissent that ultimately polarized them. Their community identified with individual leaders on specific challenges to doctrine, rather than working them out as a community. Soon disagreements turned into personal attacks. Today, most of the Worldwide Church of God has abandoned all of Herbert W. Armstrong’s distinctive teachings and have largely adopted the teachings of “mainstream” Christianity.

Our community, organization and teachings differ greatly from those of the Worldwide Church of God, though there were initially some similarities.

However, the warning to us is completely relevant. We must preserve the truth. It is a gift we have received that is like a pearl of great price, incomparable to other possessions. Our legacy as believers has been that all doctrines are subject to continuous review through the reading of Scripture. We are a community committed to regularly reading the Word and meditating upon it. As we do this, there will most certainly come honest and provocative questions from brothers and sisters. It is how we address these issues that will determine whether our eyes were fixed on the Commandments of Christ. Will we be able to have discussions on issues and challenges without showing envy and strife, confusion and every evil work (Jas 3:16)? Can members of our community raise questions safely and know that there will be loving Scriptural examination and not personal attacks?

Of the billions of people on this earth, there are so few that hold to the wholesome principles of the Truth. When we are interacting with one

another, it calls for a special sense of awe and respect. Paul exhorted us to “*be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.*” (Rom 12:10). Vine translated “*preferring*” as “the sense of taking the lead in showing deference.”⁴ Further, in Ephesians 5:21, Paul tells us that we should submit to one another “*in the fear of the Lord.*” J.B. Phillips translated “*in the fear of the Lord*” as “*because of your common reverence for Christ.*”⁵ We show this love for one another because it is what our Lord commanded. Doing so demonstrates that we honor him.

Each of us owes a great deal to our community. We fully acknowledge our personal need for improvement in applying these principles regularly. The Lord is opening new windows of opportunity throughout the world. It would be good for us to embrace the Commandments of Christ, for in these provocative words we may find the solutions to the challenges that lie ahead.

Dave Jennings

1 *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias*, Robert Roberts, First edition 1883, reprinted 1982

2 *The Scriptural Principles Governing Controversy*, The Christadelphian Magazine, 1924. Volume 61, page 342

3 *The Fragmentation of a Sect: Schism in the Worldwide Church of God*, David V. Barrett, Oxford University Press, 2013

4 *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, W.E. Vine, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1971

5 *The New Testament in Modern English, Revised Edition*, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1972

*The article that follows is from a dear brother who exemplified being
a true, virtuous husband to his wife.*

*Through extremely difficult conditions for many years, he was a
living demonstration of care and love.*

I am honored to share his article. Editor

THE VIRTUOUS HUSBAND

By Charles Link, Sr.

THE word virtue describes many facets of behavior. It gives insight into one's identity and character. Virtue in action is goodness, moral excellence, integrity, purity, courtesy, honesty, kindness, faithfulness, humility, sensitivity and all acts of good report. A secondary meaning of "virtue" in the King James Version refers to miraculous power, ability, might and strength.

The Apostle Paul realized human beings aren't inherently good and confessed, "*in me... dwelleth no good thing.*" (Rom 7:18-19). But he encouraged the Philippians to think about virtuous things (Phil 4:8). Virtuous thoughts and environments lend themselves to virtuous action. Peter urges us to "*add*" to our virtue (2 Pet 1:5). Without morally pure conduct, nothing is left but the ugliness of a person uninfluenced by the spirit

of God's Word.

Virtue cannot be forced on one by another. God desires we choose virtue yet gives us free will. One may become virtuous by being attracted to this quality in others. God calls on us to be virtuous (2 Pet 1:3). He has said, "*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*" (Lev 11:44). His desire is for us to be in harmony with Himself.

God also wants us to be in harmony with His Son (John 17:21-23). And virtuous husbands are to love and care for their wives—as Christ does the church:

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by



*Virtue cannot be forced on one by another. God desires
we choose virtue yet gives us freewill.*

the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see

that she reverence her husband.”
(Eph 5:23-33).

Now we have the basis for considering a virtuous husband. An epic example of a husband is God, who claims Israel as His bride (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:14, 20). No one's goodness can match what Yahweh has showered upon Israel. Since “*God was in Christ*” (2 Cor 5:19), we may similarly consider Jesus as our bridegroom, and even Gentiles can become his bride through the process of grafting (John 3:28-30; Rom 11:11, 16-26). Faithful believers, espoused to Jesus, look forward to the wedding day (Matt 25:1-13)— “Rejoicing in hope, and the joy of salvation.”¹

Consider the virtuousness of Jesus as he hung on the cross. When one of the thieves admitted deserving punishment, he asked Jesus, “*remember*

me when thou comest into thy kingdom." (Luke 23:42). He would not benefit by merely being remembered. What he asked for was forgiveness and a place in the Lord's Kingdom: a late plea, nevertheless a sincere belief Jesus would be resurrected to reign as King over the earth. Though Jesus was in agony, and near death, he comforted the crucified felon with an assurance perhaps best understood with the following punctuation, "*I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*"² So, this criminal will become part of the bride of Christ. What mercy Jesus showed toward one about to lose all further opportunity for redemption!

Selecting further from Scripture—Jesus was met by Jairus, "*a ruler of the synagogue.*" (Luke 8:41). He begged Jesus to follow him home and heal his dying daughter of twelve years (v. 42). Jairus would have immediately hurried Jesus to his house, but an incident caused Jesus to delay: a woman had fought her way through the crowd to touch his garment, believing this would stop her blood flow, a malady of twelve years. She spent all her resources on other physicians to no avail (v. 43). Having learned of Jesus' extraordinary healing power, she finally got close to him to touch his garment. He asked who touched him. His disciples thought it nonsensical that Jesus asked who touched him, for the crowd was pressing against him. But it was not nonsense. It was a different kind of touch, a touch of faith, and Jesus immediately felt virtue, in the sense of miraculous healing power, flow from him (v. 44-46). When the woman saw

she could not hide, she came trembling and fell down before him, overcoming her embarrassment and declared before all the people why she had touched him and how she was immediately healed (v. 47). What compassion has our great husband!

While Jesus spoke of the faith of the cured woman, bad news came from the synagogue ruler's house— "*Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?*" (Mark 5:35). At this moment, with Jairus's heart full of grief, Jesus turned to him and said, "*Be not afraid, only believe.*" (v. 36). When they reached Jairus's house, Jesus took the young lady by the hand and said, "*Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.*" (v. 41)—and she arose (v. 42). So, in an act of extreme kindness and sympathy, the inner husbandry of Jesus shined bright. As Christ's multitudinous bride, we too hope to hear from him, "Arise, be whole."

On one occasion when Jesus came into Cana, the Galileans "*received him.*" (John 4:45). They gladly welcomed he who changed the water into wine. A certain nobleman of Capernaum (sixteen to twenty miles distant) heard Jesus was in the area and upon finding the Great Physician begged him to "*heal his son: for he was at the point of death.*" (v. 47). A desperate plea was made, "*Sir, come down ere my child die.*" (v. 49). Jesus didn't rebuke the man per se, but rebuked the man's faith and said, "*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*" (v. 48). So far, there is nothing that indicated the nobleman was a virtuous husband. But the end of this narrative is key! For Jesus wanted more than followers hungry for fishes

and leeks, he wanted those who would turn their lives around unto him. The nobleman (virtuous indeed) believed—as did his whole house (v. 53).

Joseph was another virtuous husband who led and fed the people. The way he interacted with his brothers provides insight into how he likely treated his wife, Asenath. When he made himself known to his brothers, their evil hearts feared Joseph's revenge, and they lied to protect themselves. But, viewing his godly behavior with Potiphar's wife and his own devious brothers, it is obvious Joseph was a man of love, forgiveness and character—clearly, a virtuous husband and an echo of Christ.

In addition, Boaz was another example of a wonderful husband. He showed kindness and compassion to Ruth even before he was her husband by ensuring she did not go hungry (Ruth 2:15-16). He was a near kinsman to her as Christ, our elder brother, is to us; Boaz praised **her** kindness in not chasing after the younger men and acted protectively, recognizing **her** virtue (Ruth 3:9-

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11). Then, like Christ, he paid the price to redeem her and become her husband (Ruth 4:5-10).

Elkanah, a Levite, was the father of

Samuel. He had two wives—Peninnah and Hannah. Hannah was barren, but Peninnah shamelessly paraded her success in childbearing, causing Hannah low esteem and hurt from the provocation. Elkanah did not correct Peninnah for inciting family strife.

Instead, he gave Hannah more love and a double portion of the peace offering (Lev 7:11-21). He said to her, “*Am not I better to thee than ten sons?*” (1 Sam 1:8). Soon a “refreshed” Hannah gave birth to Samuel. What love, sensitivity and wisdom from her virtuous husband!

David, despite the fact he arranged a murder and took the victim's wife, was, nevertheless, a man after God's own heart. And all else he did was a praise to God. His discourse with Abigail when she thwarted his plan of retribution shows the extent godliness pervaded his life. David was a virtuous husband with all his wives (except Michal who brought separation upon herself).

Finally, rounding out both sides of our topic, Korah's example led his wife and family down the wrong path. Fortunately, his children refused to listen to him and were spared the fate of 250 others. And King Solomon, despite his wisdom, was unequally yoked (2 Cor 6:14-17) to Pharaoh's daughter and 699 other wives from various nations. Solomon regressed spiritually as they turned his heart after their gods (1 Kgs 11:1-3). Additionally, we are familiar with the tragic example of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). Obviously, there was nothing virtuous about Ananias's conduct.

The previous considerations were from Biblical times. Let's fast-forward to more recent times and mention one whose character inspires all of us. I knew such a husband twenty-seven years ago. A brief illustration is sufficient to show his virtuousness in every role as husband, father and friend. Our article is not concerned with **who** he is but rather **how** he lived to earn

him the title of a virtuous husband. His job in New Jersey, at the age of seventy-five, started at 7 a.m. But every day at 6 a.m. he conducted a Bible class, well attended by other workers who came to hear him expound the Scriptures. His genuine love and understanding of the Truth and people was reflected in his classes. People were drawn to him. God, of course, gave the increase, but He used this man to successfully introduce many to the Truth. His entire family was bonded together by the strength of his character. Though he and his wife had somewhat different styles, they didn't clash, rather, they balanced and complemented each other. The core of their marriage was love and shared faith. Godliness was key to his being a

virtuous husband.

Now I have a few remarks concerning myself. My wife, Doris, fell asleep in the Lord having battled Alzheimer's disease for seventeen years. We loved and cared for each other in sickness and in health. Whether or not I have been a virtuous husband will be decided by our Lord Jesus on the day of reckoning. Some say I did all I could for her, but I know there was always more I could have done.

So for now we must keep all our lamps burning bright. For we know not the day or the hour when the bridegroom shall be in our sight.

*Charles Link, Sr.
(Moorestown, NJ)*

¹ *Christadelphian Hymn Book*, Hymn 383, The Christadelphian, 404 Shaftmoor Lane, Birmingham, UK B28 8SZ, 2002, pp. 558-559.

² Roberts, R., *Christendom Astray*, The Christadelphian, 404 Shaftmoor Lane, Birmingham, UK B28 8SZ, 1978, p. 27.



Charles Link, Sr., and his wife, Doris

HOW TO NEUTRALIZE BITTERNESS

By Sam Taylor

THE human body has several defense mechanisms to protect us from injury or illness. But few are more underappreciated than the small, yet powerful, taste buds. While I'm from the United States, I'm sure I can speak for many around the globe when I say we have forgotten about the protective purpose of tastebuds. Too often, we only picture our taste buds as a means of enjoying good food. But it's not the tongue's ability to detect sweet or salty that makes it useful in defending our bodies. Rather, what makes our tongue so valuable is its ability to detect bitterness—and if you usually drink coffee with cream and sugar, you know how quickly your body reacts if you forget to add it. Without the ability to taste bitterness, we are more susceptible to ingesting natural poisons found in plants.

Yet bitterness isn't always bad, as it's

found in leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli and kale, that provide the body with antioxidants. When looking for a simple definition of bitterness, I came across a word that summed it up well—"unsweet." People tend to avoid bitterness to the same extent that they pursue sweetness. Not only that, the definition of "unsweet" acts as a hint about how to fix bitterness in your cooking. It turns out that using either sugar or natural fat helps to take the edge off bitterness in food. That's why the most common things people put in their coffee are sugar and cream. Although sweet doesn't completely neutralize bitterness, it removes just enough of the edge to form a more complex taste that some appreciate more than simply sweet food.

While modern agriculture has largely eliminated bitterness from vegetables through selective breeding, ancient

civilizations were quite familiar with bitter-tasting foods. The most well-known feast in the Bible featured a bitter plant as an essential component of the meal. Listen to God's instructions to Moses about the Passover in Exodus 12:7-13:

"Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt."¹

The Passover seder is a symbolic meal that commemorates God's deliverance

of the Israelites from Egypt's oppression. Each part of the meal symbolizes a different facet of Israel's experience in Egypt that God wanted future generations to remember. To this day, when Jewish people celebrate Passover, they first eat what they call "*maror*," bitter herbs, a symbol of the bitterness of slavery. Later in the evening, they dip the bitter herbs in a sweet dip called "*charoset*," (pronounced "ha-RO-set") which represents the sweetening of their burden of bitterness and suffering through God's deliverance.

Just as the bitterness of food can be offset by sweetness and fats, the bitterness we endure in life can be offset through seeking to taste of God's promise of salvation. It's no coincidence that Israel was often called "*the land of milk and honey*." (Exo 3:8, 17; Deut 6:3). The food eaten during the Passover meal reminded everyone about God's promise of salvation tied so closely to the land. David encouraged others to seek these blessings out for themselves in Psalm 34:4-10:

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is

Just as the bitterness of food can be offset by sweetness and fats, the bitterness we endure in life can be offset through seeking to taste of God's promise of salvation.

good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

You and I may not have been slaves in Egypt, but we’ve likely experienced bitterness. Maybe you were looking for support from others, and no one stood by you. Or perhaps someone you looked up to let you down and made you doubt your judgment. That bitterness may also come from feeling like your life isn’t what it could be. This could leave you resenting some of your life decisions. Whatever the cause, you can still recognize how **unsweet** that sensation was or continues to be in your life. It’s human nature to experience those emotions, especially ones that feel outside your control. But we need to be careful not to cultivate those feelings because that bitterness is an acid that will consume us from within. While none of us can change our past, or eliminate the causes of bitterness in our lives, we can discipline our actions going forward. We can choose

to show God’s mercy and forgiveness instead of seeking our vindication. We can choose to break the cycle. We can choose to taste the sweetness of God’s promise in His Word. The promise that what lies ahead is so much better than what’s behind.

So, the next time your coffee tastes off and you go to pour cream and sugar in to get it right, remember that God invites you to do the same for your life. He invites you to recognize the bitterness you feel in your life, the disappointment, the resentment, and the hurt you feel. These are some of the reasons to pursue the example of God and His Son more eagerly, because to the extent that we avoid bitterness, we should pursue sweetness. To close, I’d like to reflect on Romans 8:18, a simple reminder that whatever is unsweet will soon be offset by the sweetness found in the Kingdom of God:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

*Sam Taylor
(Paris Avenue, OH)*

1 All references taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise stated.

We can choose to break the cycle.
We can choose to taste the sweetness of
God’s promise in His Word.

IN HARMONY

By Juliana K. Anderson

MYson, Bro. Grant Anderson, suffered a severe traumatic brain injury in 2007. He was in a coma for six weeks. We were told to let him die because at best he would be a vegetable. He was a music major, getting ready to finish his last year of college at the time. Although it took him six years to finish his music degree after his car accident, he did it! He still has a left side deficit, but he doesn't let that hold him back. Two months ago, he gave a talk on "How Music Affects the Plasticity of an Injured Brain" for a Brain Injury Association Conference. Who would have thought he would be giving a talk like that? Along with God's healing power, prayer and support from family and friends, music played and continues to play a powerful role in his recovery. In preparing for his talk, Grant found research that shows singing produces oxytocin and dopamine, which are

neurotransmitters that contribute to the well-being of people who sing. Singing is a mood enhancer and a great tool for memorizing information as well as benefiting muscle memory in physical recovery.

When considering the benefit of music on the brain, it's no surprise that our Creator incorporated singing in his book of life. There are many directives in the Bible to rejoice in song and many examples of people singing. In addition, music has health benefits to soothe, reduce stress and bring feelings of happiness and contentment. These benefits were designed by God and given to us well before research established their value.

Grant says, "Music helped tie my life together." We sang songs to motivate him to come out of his coma and remember his past. Music brings us back to special events, like family

gatherings or Bible schools. It helps us remember Scripture and give thanks even in our trials. *“Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”* (Psa 30:4 KJV).

Of course, songs without words give God praise. *“Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with timbrel and lyre!”* (Psa 149:3). Singing, however, has specific benefits. We use both sides of our brain and incorporate the whole being when we sing. Singing God’s Word puts His thoughts deep into our being. God’s name in Hebrew, YHWH, is composed of “aspirational” letters. This means you have to breathe to say his name! The physical act of pushing air in and out, especially when we sing, is God’s breath within us.

Our family not only sang to Grant but with each other throughout our trials, as Paul and Silas did from jail. It gave us “hope to cope” as Grant puts it now. The benefits we experienced are supported in Scriptures:

Singing comforts: *“Sing for joy... For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.”* (Isa 49:13).¹

Singing builds trust and hope in salvation: *“I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.”* (Isa 12:2 KJV).

Singing brings joy and helps us deal with life: *“Thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.”* (Psa 63:7).

Singing brings blessings: *“Blessed*



The Anderson family in song (Photo by Sara Elizabeth Meteyer, 2009)

Singing together can bring one to tears when done with emotion and expression. It takes a lot of trust and an open heart to sing with one another.

are those who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise!” (Psa 84:4).

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE TOGETHER

Grant’s experience verifies research that finds singing as a group has many benefits as well. Singing together can bring one to tears when it is done with emotion and expression. It takes a lot of trust and an open heart to sing with one another. When we sing as a community, we learn to balance our voices and sing at the same pace as those around us. We are guided to sing within the same chords, making a beautiful sound unto the LORD. Sometimes the notes may cause tension with other notes. This is written in the music to create variety. When the tension is resolved at the end of phrases, it is comforting and uplifting.

The benefits of participating in group singing have significant lessons for ecclesial life as well.

- Singing together teaches us that each person’s voice is important for healthy ecclesial life. If you are too strong with your words you may drown out someone else’s voice. If you don’t speak up, then others won’t hear what you can contribute. There is a balance to the way we communicate that should produce a sweet sound unto the LORD.
- When we sing together, we consider the pace. Changes of pace in a song are effective in enhancing mood

and interest in the song. Yet when we change pace, it’s best to do it as one voice and so it is with an ecclesia. Changing the pace on different issues keeps the group excited and interested when it is done in unison. Patiently and compassionately encouraging one another to move faster or slower when needed keeps us in sync.

- Singing together does not mean we have to all sing the same notes. Similarly, we don’t all have to behave exactly the same in an ecclesia. *“For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function.”* (Rom 12:4). When disagreements happen, the goal should be to work them out, showing love and care for one another’s uniqueness. Who has not felt the joy of resolving tension you had with someone?! Differences can add variety and excitement. They are how we sharpen and develop each other as well.

LET US SING

Recently we have been deprived of the opportunity, due to COVID, to interact with one another and practice these skills. Our ecclesia again started meeting in our hall last month with reduced attendance, social distancing, mask-wearing and refraining from hugging. Singing has stopped due to the explosive bursts of air it creates, making it a risk for spreading

Working in harmony reflects God's love to those around us.
What we sing and how we sing is a way of telling the world
about God's name and His salvation plan.

COVID-19. Though these restrictions are necessary, it is indeed a sad time.

There are, however, ways to continue the benefits of music in our spiritual lives during this time of isolation. A big one is to sing together as a family at home. You don't have to be a gifted musician to sing. God loves it when we sing, and the benefits of singing are not dependent on perfect pitch. If your family is musical, music may come naturally. For those who are not musical, a variety of hymns and songs of praise have been made into lovely videos that can be accessed online. You can sing your heart out with these songs, even if you live by yourself!

Singing in a virtual choir is another option. We had the pleasure of doing so with the Online Christadelphian Bible School over the summer. It was directed by Bro. Jacob and Sis. Josie Walker. We were given practice links to learn our parts. We met together on Zoom and connected with old and new friends which was a lovely experience. Once we learned our parts and understood how to make an individual video, Grant and I made ours at home. I have to say, it was more challenging than I thought it would be. Hearing yourself sing is not necessarily a comforting thing, especially for a musician. My first reaction was, "This is awful; I'm not sending it in!" However, wanting to support the activity we submitted our flawed contributions. Much time was put in by the directors to create a beautiful "virtual choir" with all

our voices. I was impressed by how any individual mistakes were not noticeable in the group. Where I was weak, another was strong. Together we presented pleasant, unified songs of praise.²

THE POWER OF HARMONY

A spiritual lesson that comes to mind from participating in a choir is that our individual flaws are not only covered by Christ, but by the body of Christ. *"So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them... Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another."* (Rom 12:5, 6, 15, 16). Music is a universal language that binds us together.

To live in harmony, it's helpful if we are considerate of the kind of music that we sing, so that it gives praise to God and at the same time is edifies everyone. Younger members do well to be considerate to the music that has meaning to our older members. Music holds their memories. Conversely, older members do well to adjust to what has meaning for the younger members. Everybody is moved by a different style of music. Finding the balance to embrace



all age groups creates harmony. *“And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”* (Col 3:14).

Working in harmony reflects God’s love to those around us. What we sing and how we sing is a way of telling the world about God’s name and his salvation plan. *“I will sing unto thee among the nations.”* (Psa 57:9 KJV). *“Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.”* (Psa 96:2). *“He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.”* (Psa 40:3).

Jesus has a song within him. A Messianic Psalm says, *“By day the LORD commands his steadfast love; and at night his song is with me.”* (Psa 42:8) Through Christ’s sacrifice, we will sing as one with our savior! *“For both he that*

sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” (Heb 2:11-12 KJV).

How exciting it is that God will sing! *“The LORD your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”* (Zeph 3:17). This vision is a mood enhancer for sure!

I look forward to the time when the *“dead shall live; their bodies shall rise... and sing for joy... then shall the lame man [like Grant] leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.”* (Isa 26:19; 35:6). Even so come Lord Jesus!

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(Ann Arbor, MI)

¹ All references are taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) unless otherwise stated

² The virtual choir songs, “The Duteous Day” and “Set Me as a Seal” are on the WCF website. www.onlinebible.school/choir-music



AVOIDING BIAS

By Richard Morgan

ONE of the most challenging things to do when studying the Bible is reading it without bias. An intellectually honest person will admit that they have biases and tend to filter their Bible reading through a particular lens.

How do we at least **try** to read the Bible without bias? The first rule is to recognize the problem and humble ourselves to admit our biases. But, beyond that, in what ways can we limit reading the Bible according to pre-conceived ideas and let our minds open up to the true message from God?

One basic rule of thumb is to remember that while the Bible was written for us (Rom 15:4), it was not written **to** us. It's easy to be egocentric and read the Bible through 21st century eyes, but the original authors and readers of the

Bible were from the Ancient Near East (ANE) and lived in an entirely different culture from ours.

An example of modern bias is in the area of science. Many Bible expositors have been guilty of trying to inject modern-day scientific understanding into the Bible as if that will help to prove it is the Word of God. There are two reasons to reject that kind of reading of the Bible.

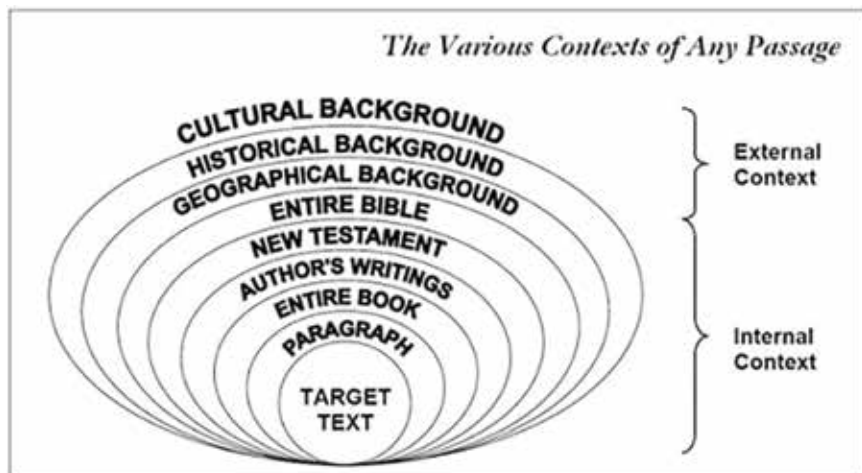
First, the original authors and readers of the Bible were primitive in their understanding of science. If modern-day concepts were used in Scripture, they would not have been able to understand them. While it is a quaint idea to think God left scientific understanding hidden in Scripture for thousands of years only to be revealed in the modern era. There is too much

One basic rule of thumb is to remember that while the Bible was written for us, it was not written to us.

evidence in the Bible that the language used was geared toward to ANE understanding.

Second, let's think about the question philosophically. What if the Bible **were** scientifically accurate? What would that

understanding of science. For instance, today, we know what causes mental and physical illnesses and use various terms to describe them. But in the first century, many conditions were ascribed to demons. Christadelphians have



mean? Is our understanding of science today at the zenith of all knowledge? Aren't we also relatively primitive in our understanding of science? What if God caused a 22nd century knowledge of scientific concepts to be written in Scripture? We would be mystified for a further century. We could continue down this philosophical rabbit hole until we realize for the Bible to be truly scientifically accurate, it would have to contain concepts only accessible to the mind of the Creator of science Himself. The point is that the Bible was never intended to be a science textbook. It was written in the language of the time according to the ANE culture, and there is nothing to be concerned about when we read passages in Scripture that differ from the modern-day

done an excellent job at reading those passages according to the language of the day in which the Bible was written. Therefore, the key to reading the Bible is to understand the context within which it was originally written. The diagram above illustrates the various contexts we should seek to understand when studying any Bible passage. We've talked here a little about cultural background, and if we use that as a framework, then the other aspects of context will more easily fall into place. In next month's article, we'll look at some other ways to understand bias and how to overcome it.

*Richard Morgan,
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EVERYONE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES

By Neil Robin

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

THIS phrase appears twice in the book of Judges, in 17:6 and 21:25, the book's last verse. It functions as a pair of bookends for these chapters and sums up the situation in the land of Israel at that time and the general attitude of the people. There was no centralized political or military control of the Israelite people at this time. Each tribe was led by its own chiefs or elders, and each local community felt free to govern its own affairs.

It was also likely there was no centralized religious authority or teaching. God gave the tribe of Levi the responsibility for teaching His law (Lev 10:11; Deut 31:9-13, 33:10). Without central authority, however, the implementation of this responsibility depended on the circumstances in each local community. The message of Judges 17-21 indicates this duty was generally not taking place.

The intent of Judges chapters 17-21 was not to show a comprehensive account of any particular time in Israel's history but a series of “snapshots” indicating the attitude produced by an environment without central authority. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes, and ultimately sinful behavior came as a result.

As we consider the events recorded in these chapters, let us reflect on our responsibility to ensure that God's word is faithfully taught, reminding each other of our shared convictions, preaching to anyone who will listen and teaching our young. It is highly unlikely any of us will hear God's word truthfully expounded from many other sources in today's secular Western nations. If we don't teach God's values and principles, the non-spiritual world will be only too happy to fill our minds and hearts with its own.

In Judges 17, we see a young man, Micah, stealing money from his mother and then confessing the theft only out of superstitious fear of a curse she had uttered. Instead of instructing or disciplining him, she praises him. Together they dedicate the money to God and use some of it (less than 20%) to make an idol. Micah then set up his own worship center, complete with that idol, as well as a shrine, an ephod and a family priest. Later he meets a wandering Levite and offers him the (paid) position of household priest. The chapter concludes with Micah expressing confidence God will bless him because he now has a Levite as his priest.

Given that our key passage states “everyone” did what was right in his own eyes, we can assume Micah stands as an example of what many other Israelite households were doing at the time.

In Micah, we see a man who professes faithfulness to God yet seems to be ignorant about God’s requirements for godly worship. He does not appear to be repentant over his theft. He dedicates money to God, yet keeps most of it for himself. He thinks he can worship God through a man-made image. He appears to have some vague understanding of how the worship in the tabernacle took place—he knows an ephod is involved and that the tribe of Levi was chosen for the priesthood. He believes that this woefully inadequate knowledge and obedience will be enough to secure blessings from God. Perhaps he sees Yahweh as merely one of many tribal deities whose favor can be bought by some mindless ritual.

He certainly does not see Yahweh as an authority on how he ought to live.

In chapter 18, the tribe of Dan is looking for a place to settle. They are the only tribe who have not yet done so, presumably because they were either unable or unwilling to take the portion of land allotted to them in Joshua 19:40-48. In their journey, they come to Micah’s house and encounter the Levite, who is apparently known to them. They ask him to enquire of God whether their quest will be successful, and he declares, in God’s name, that it will. Then they journey toward Laish and on the way persuade the Levite to abandon Micah to now serve as priest for their entire tribe. They also steal Micah’s idols, ephod and shrine and threaten him with violence when he protests. Micah returns home, while the tribe of Dan proceeds, Levite and shrine in tow, to conquer Laish and establish themselves there.

The narrative’s focus shifts from Micah to the tribe of Dan, who, having failed to conquer their allotted land, find an isolated town, Laish, belonging to the Sidonian people. The Sidonians were not among the people groups to be destroyed/evicted from the Promised Land, and this appears to be an opportunistic invasion rather than obedience to God’s commands. The Danites enquire of God, whether they will succeed, which may indicate some measure of faith on the surface. Yet, it seems that in the Ancient Near East (ANE), it was standard procedure for a military endeavor to begin with a consultation of the tribal deity.

The Levite assures them, in God's name, that they will succeed. The text does not reveal whether he spoke these words by his own initiative or whether he performed some ritual with the shrine and ephod by which he believed Yahweh's will would be revealed. Later he is easily persuaded to leave his position in Micah's household and serve as their tribal religious leader, perhaps tempted by the upgrade in status (and presumably a salary increase!). Verse 30 gives the Levite's name as "Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses." Some manuscripts read Manasseh instead of Moses, and Biblical genealogies sometimes use "son" as a general term for "male descendant," so we cannot be sure if this man was, in fact, the grandson of Moses. If he was, then it's a shocking indication of just how far the entire nation had lost sight of God only two generations after entering the land. In chapter 19, another Levite from Ephraim's hill country had a concubine who returns to her father's house. He went to be reconciled to her and spent four or five days enjoying the

hospitality of his father-in-law. This hospitality is in stark contrast to the welcome they received in the town of Gibeah, where they faced having to spend the night in the town square until an old man offers them lodging for the night. Some of men of Gibeah then surrounded the house and demanded that the Levite be handed over to them to satisfy their lusts. The host refused, instead offering the man's concubine and his own daughter. The Levite sent his concubine out to them, and after a night of horrific abuse, she was left for dead. On finding her in the morning, he cut up her body and sent the pieces to the various tribes, demanding that action be taken.

This is where the narrative takes a decidedly darker turn in one of the most appalling chapters in the Bible. The inhabitants of Gibeah, save for one old man, disregarded the requirement for hospitality demanded by their culture and went as far as to demand the visitors be handed over for their own pleasure. The old man was willing to protect his male visitor, but only at



the expense of the women in the house. The Levite showed no hesitation in handing over his concubine to save himself, and his outrage and demands for justice the following morning rang hollow, given his own part in her demise.

In chapter 20, the people of Israel gather as a whole to hear the Levite's complaint against Gibeah. On their initiative, the tribes decided to punish the inhabitants of Gibeah. The tribe of Benjamin (to which Gibeah belonged) refused to hand them over to face retribution and instead rose in their defense. Before the battle began, the other tribes enquired of God at Bethel who should lead their attack. God's answer was Judah. On the first day of battle, the tribes were defeated by Benjamin. The tribes enquired of God again and were told to continue the fighting. On the second day, Benjamin again emerged victorious. The tribes enquired of God a third time, and this time he promised them victory. On

the third day, Benjamin was defeated, and Gibeah was destroyed. The tribes then destroyed every Benjamite town and person they could find, leaving the tribe virtually wiped out.

Here we clearly see the result of Israel having no king. Without any centralized authority to appeal to for justice, the Levite contacted each tribe individually. They gathered together for what can perhaps be described as vigilante justice, at best, and sheer vindictive revenge, at worst. Benjamin's refusal to agree appears motivated by a desire to put tribal loyalty above the need for justice. The tribes enquired of God, which may have given the appearance of faith, but as pointed out earlier, this was standard practice for any group about to execute a military campaign. Note that they don't ask of God until after they have mustered their army and made preparations. It isn't a request for guidance on how to handle the Gibeah situation; it's merely a question of tactics the night before the battle.



Landscape of Israel, due west of Jerusalem

Why does God answer the way He does and yet allow them to be defeated on the first two days? Perhaps He allowed these experiences of defeat to humble them until they were ready to approach Him with the correct attitude. They should have asked at the very beginning of the chapter whether they should be engaged in this campaign of retribution at all.

With God's help, or perhaps without God working against them, they defeated Benjamin and destroyed Gibeah. Yet the violence did not stop there. After Gibeah's destruction, they continued pursuing the Benjamite forces until all but 600 men were wiped out. They returned to sack and burn all of the Benjamite towns that were without defenders, killing the women and children. This goes far beyond anything that could have been remotely justified as retribution for Gibeah's atrocity.

In chapter 21, the tribes faced up to the consequences of their near annihilation of Benjamin, which then numbered only 600 men with no wives or children to carry on the tribe.

Furthermore, the tribes had sworn an oath not to give any of their daughters to Benjamin as wives. Faced with, on the one hand, the end of a tribe and, on the other hand, the breaking of their oath, they began to look for a way out. First, they decided that any towns whose fighting men did not answer the summons to the civil war were now liable for being

punished with destruction. Whether Jabesh Gilead was the only such town or was simply the most convenient one found, the record does not tell us, but the town was attacked, and everyone killed save for 400 unmarried girls who were given to the surviving Benjamites. That left 200 men without wives, so another solution was found. There was a feast held at Shiloh at which unmarried girls came out to dance, and the tribes reached an agreement with Benjamin that they would not interfere if any Benjamites snatched some of these girls as wives. The newly married Benjamites returned to their ruined towns to rebuild and repopulate, while the rest of the tribes return home.

The tribes then began to realize the implications of their spree of violence and bloodlust in almost wiping out an entire tribe. In verse 3, they wept and demanded of God why He has allowed this to happen as if having entirely forgotten that it was their will and their doing, not God's. While they began to sympathize with the surviving Benjamites, they weren't willing to

risk being cursed by breaking their rash oath, and so they started looking for loopholes to get around it. Notably, they did not enquire of God at all, save for their initial complaint. Their first solution involved yet more unprovoked murder of fellow Israelites in the attack on Jabesh Gilead and the taking of their newly orphaned girls. Their second solution

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consisted of kidnapping young girls taking part in the dancing at a feast in Shiloh. Note in verse 19 that this is a feast dedicated to Yahweh Himself. It says much about their attitude toward God that they would use a festival of religious worship in His name to arrange this sordid mass abduction, simply to provide a loophole around a foolish oath. The record does not comment on what any of the 600 or more girls thought of these solutions.

How did the Israelites end up in the bad state summarized by these chapters? It's widely recognized that chapters 1-16 of Judges show God's people going through a continual cycle of:

- They are unfaithful to God -->
- God allows oppression -->
- They cry to God for deliverance -->
- God sends a judge to deliver them from the oppressor -->
- They live faithfully for a while under the judge's influence -->
- The judge dies -->
- They are unfaithful to God again.


On closer examination of the text, however, what is depicted in Judges may not be a circle but rather a downward spiral. Each iteration of the cycle sees a deterioration in at least two elements:

- **The character of the judge.**

Compare the first judges such as Othniel and Ehud, of whom nothing negative is said, with later judges such as Jephthah—pushed to the fringes of society by his brothers, acting as if a crime lord—and Samson, a man compromised by his willingness to mix with Philistine culture while not paying allegiance to Philistine gods. This suggests that as time went on, each judge reflected the character of Israelite society at large, and even the most faithful men were not much better than those around them.

- **The involvement of the people in their deliverance.**

Compare early judges such as Ehud and Barak, who command large armies of Israelites with Samson, who is a one-person army handed over to the Philistines



Mosaic showing Samson carrying the gate of Gaza on his shoulders. (photo by Jim Haberman)

by his own terrified people. This suggests that as time went on, the people at large were less and less willing to commit themselves to a call from a divinely appointed leader, manifestation of a general lack of faith or interest in God.

God's willingness to hear and to rescue His people never failed. Still, we can see a steady decline in the faith and the character of Israelite society throughout the book of Judges, not only within chapters 17 to 21. God's appointment of a judge in answer to prayer whenever the people were experiencing hardship was not working. Without a king, they had sunk into a pit of moral decay in which everyone recognized no authority higher than what was right in his own eyes.

Judges was probably written to introduce a hereditary monarchy system, a permanent leader to act as a representative of God and a moral example for the people. Over time, in theory, the people's character would come to reflect the character of their king. Unfortunately, both Israel and Judah had a mixture of good kings, indifferent kings, and terrible kings. One of the worst, Manasseh (2 Kgs

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21:1-18, see also 2 Kgs 23:21-27; Jer 15:1-4), finally left Judah in an irreversible moral decline that resulted in the Babylonian invasion and exile.

The system of hereditary monarchy did not prevent God's people from falling

into moral decay either. Only the perfect example and willing sacrifice of the Lord Jesus could do that. He was, is and will again be Israel's true king, the only man who ever lived a life of perfect virtue and faithfulness before God.

And what of us? We have what the Israelites in the times of the judges and kings did not have: a perfect human representative of God whose moral example and character can be applied to every circumstance in our lives. Yet, do we apply them? Are your decisions and actions based more often on the example and teachings of Jesus or what seems right in your own eyes?

Next time we'll explore that question in more depth and, with Judges 17-21 as our basis, consider ways in which we can examine the motivations behind what we believe and do.

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(Wardley, UK)*

CORRECTION: Due to a layout mistake in the January issue, a small portion of Bro. Caleb Osborn's article, *Men Loved Darkness*, on pages 30-31 was omitted. The complete, corrected article appears online and in the electronic edition. *Editor*

THE RICH MAN, LAZARUS AND ABRAHAM (CONCLUSION)

By Steven Cox

Why did Jesus use the Pharisee's doctrine?

WE have shown that the teaching about Hades and Abraham's Bosom is not biblical but rather stems from contemporary Jewish superstition. This helps us on the fundamental principle that the Bible does not contradict itself—but creates an even bigger problem: surely Jesus would not approve false teaching?! The idea itself is abhorrent.

The answer: "Well, it was only a parable" solves nothing. Even in a parable, we would expect consistent teaching. It would have been equally possible for Christ to have told the parable in a way that fits with Old Testament teaching. Christ certainly did not need to refer to Hades, the great chasm, Abraham's Bosom, and "Father Abraham." (Luke 16:24).¹ So, we have to conclude that Christ had a good reason to do so.

Another suggested alternative: "Christ was accommodating himself to his listeners to get the message across." But this also will not do. Admittedly there are examples of Christ speaking to the poor and the simple in terms that they would understand. But never to the disciples, and certainly not to the Pharisees, did Christ "accommodate" his words to false teachings to make other points understood.

Neither would his disciples. Paul even warns about the various Jewish books, such as *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, which circulated in the first century: "Pay no attention to Jewish myths." (Titus 1:14).

Yet we still have to explain why the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is so badly at odds with the rest of the Bible.

“IF I DRIVE OUT DEMONS BY BEELZEBUB...”

The answer may be in observing how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees on an earlier occasion. In Matthew 12:22 Jesus heals a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. But when the Pharisees heard this they said: *“It is only by Beelzebul [“Beelzebub” KJV], the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”* (Matt 12:24).

Now Jesus could have responded to this slander in several ways. He could have quoted Exodus 4:11 to show that it is God who makes man blind or mute, not demons. He could equally have quoted 1 Kings 18:27 and 2 Kings 1:3 to show that Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, had failed to prove his existence in the days of Elijah. But he didn’t. Instead, Jesus counters with irony: *“If I drive out demons by Beelzebul [“Beelzebub” KJV], by whom do your people drive them out? So then they will be your judges.”* (Matt 12:27).

The comment *“So then they will be your judges”* is a powerful rebuke. In saying this, Jesus threw the falseness of the Pharisees’ teaching right back at them. Back in the days of the prophet Elijah, his way of dealing with the prophets of Baal was not much different (see 1 Kings 18:27). Elijah mocked them to show Israel how false they were.

So, if Jesus makes use of Pharisee beliefs in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus we need to ask: “Does Jesus confirm them, or ridicule them?”

JESUS CONTRADICTS THE PHARISEES’ BELIEFS

The first contradiction has already been mentioned. In the Jewish myth, Zephaniah was able to cross by angelic boat from one side of Hades to another. Jesus contradicts this: *“A great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone else cross over from there to us.”* (Luke 16:26).

Another contradiction is that in the myth Abraham, Isaac and Jacob intercede for those in torment in Hades. “As they looked at all the torments they called out, praying before the Lord Almighty saying, ‘We pray you on behalf of those who are in all these torments so you might have mercy on all of them.’ And when I saw them, I said to the angel who spoke with me, ‘Who are they?’ He said, ‘Those who beseech the Lord are Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.’” (Apoc. Zeph. 11:1-2). But Jesus contradicts this. Instead, he has Abraham refusing to help relieve the Rich Man’s suffering: *“Now he is comforted here and you are in agony.”* (Luke 16:25).

Another contradiction is that in other Jewish myths Abraham is credited with the ability to do what the Rich Man asks (v. 27) and resurrect the dead. For example, in the first-century Jewish fiction, *The Testament of Abraham*, the patriarch Abraham pleads for the dead and returns 7,000 to the living. “Then Abraham arose and fell upon the earth,

*So, if Jesus makes use of Pharisee beliefs in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus we need to ask;
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and [the Angel of] Death with him, and God sent a spirit of life into the dead and they were made alive again.” (*Testament of Abraham* ‘A’ 18:11). But Jesus again contradicts the myths and has Abraham refusing to raise Lazarus: “*They have Moses and the Prophets, let them listen to them.*” (Luke 16:29). This reflects Jesus’ own condemnation of the Pharisees in John 5:39.

JESUS RIDICULES FALSE TEACHING

There is only one solution left that will explain why Jesus should deliberately choose to tell a parable drawn from the Pharisees’ superstitions. This is that Jesus was showing the teaching

to be false by exposing it. And how? By making the main characters in this parable real people: Caiaphas and Lazarus (Simon the Leper?) of Bethany.

According to the Pharisees’ view of the universe, Simon, as a leper (and therefore a “sinner”) should, after his death at Bethany, have descended to be tormented in the fiery part of Hades. Caiaphas on the other hand, would, as High Priest at the very top of the Jewish religious hierarchy, be guaranteed a pleasant welcome by Abraham on the other side of the underworld.

And yet Jesus told them a version of their teaching which had the beggar Lazarus received by Abraham, while

the wealthy high priest, clothed in purple and fine linen, descended into the flames.

To add “burning coals,” Jesus told how the high priest called on “*Father Abraham*” to show mercy, and Abraham refused. (The mythical ferryboat across the chasm in Hades was not in service!) Nor was Abraham inclined to help the Rich Man who had enjoyed such a good life on earth (Luke 16:25).

Then, as a final rebuke, Jesus has Caiaphas ask Abraham to send Lazarus the Leper back



John Everett Millais: *The Rich Man and Lazarus (The Parables of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ)*

to the house of Annas in Jerusalem to warn his brothers-in-law. But again, Abraham refuses, twice. *"They will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."* (Luke 16:31).

In this refusal Christ has Abraham promising Caiaphas the same torment in the fire for his entire household: Eleazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Matthias, and Annas the Younger, and no doubt his father-in-law Annas the Elder also.

No wonder, then, that this is the last of the series of parables in Luke chapters 14-16 either addressed to the Pharisees or with the Pharisees present. In the next verse (Luke 17:1) the Pharisees are gone, and Jesus is left alone with the disciples.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is not as simple as it appears. Some of the keys (purple and fine linen, the beggar covered in sores, the crumbs from the rich man's table) can only be understood by comparison with other Old Testament and New Testament passages.
2. The parable contains some details where a knowledge of history

(the five brothers mentioned in Josephus), or of contemporary beliefs (the Bosom of Abraham), can be helpful.

3. Even without these the parable certainly does not support modern ideas about heaven-going.
4. The parable cannot be literal. Caiaphas did not literally die and descend to Hades. He was still very much alive in Acts 4:6. Likewise, although Abraham refused to raise Lazarus in the parable, in reality Jesus did raise Lazarus. But Jesus says in John 11:11 that Lazarus *"slept"*; he was not literally in Abraham's Bosom. And finally, of course we know from Hebrews 11:13, 39-40 that Abraham is not literally presiding over the underworld; he is dead, awaiting the resurrection.

The only thing that is literal about the parable is the prophecy of Luke 16:31 that was fulfilled in John 12:10 when Caiaphas and his family tried to kill Lazarus rather than accept the fact that Jesus had raised him from the dead.

Steven Cox
(Leicester Westleigh, UK)

JOB AND SATAN... JESUS AND THE DEVIL... AND US

By Ken Sommerville

YEARS ago, the book of Job was the theme of a weekend campout at Los Osos campground near Moro Bay, north of Santa Barbara, California. It was at this conference, in the course of considering the Book of Job in depth, that I realized I had been glossing over something in chapter one that seemed to me to be a very important point being overlooked in the weekend's study.

CHAPTER ONE SETS THE STAGE

We are all familiar with the story of Job and the example Job sets for us to follow. He was a man who remained faithful in the face of extreme adversity. James, our Lord's brother and the leader of the ecclesia in Jerusalem, cites Job's story in making this very point. *"Behold, we count them happy who endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."* (Jas 5:11). The Book of Job from chapter 3 to chapter 32, the lion's share of the book,

relates the misguided attempts by Job's three friends to help and comfort him and Job's protestations of his innocence. These conversations become the trees that make up the forest of the Book of Job. When we are surrounded by many trees, we can lose sight of the forest. When we come to the end of Job's trial, while we are very happy God rewards Job bountifully for his faithfulness, some of us may have a nagging concern about the extremity of Job's trials. They seem disproportionate. That is not an unreasonable reaction considering that in the first chapter in verse one, Job is described as *"perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."* (Job 1:1). For my part, the classes I had heard over the years sought to resolve this concern by emphasizing some of the wrong statements Job made later on when he was in the depths of despair. Though not without some merit, these explanations did not seem adequate.

WHO STARTS THE ARGUMENT?

Who was Satan in the Book of Job? No matter who we think he was, he was bad. We do not share the belief that Satan is a supernatural evil being. It is an interesting aside to read Scofield's comment at the end of Job in the *Scofield Study Bible*. Fitting the erroneous belief of a supernatural devil into Job's experiences generated the following comment: "Such experiences [Job's] as interpreted here by divine revelation, reveal the ultimate triumph of a wise and loving God in His unseen contest with Satan over the souls of men." Why Satan wants men's souls and what he does with them is nowhere explained.

It is easy to assume that Satan is the root cause of Job's trials. As we shall see, he is, but not in the way we may think. The Satan in the Book of Job is not someone who we have any reason to believe hated Job. In fact, when we first meet him, he is one of a number of the "sons of God" who had come in a religious observance to "present themselves before the LORD." (Job 2:1).

He is not recorded as having spoken until he was challenged by the "LORD," no doubt an angel sent by God. The Bible records many examples of God's angels appearing and conversing with people. The LORD challenges this man who is averse to His ways by pointing out to him Job's good character: "*Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect [“blameless” ESV; “honest” NIV] and an upright man who feareth God and escheweth evil?*" (Job 1:8). Job comes through the first trial with unwavering faith: "*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*" (Job 1:21). When the sons of God met again, God confronts the adversary again with Job's exemplary conduct: "*Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? And still he holdest fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause.*" (Job 2:3). God is setting Job forth as an example for this man to consider.

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God knows our hearts and He knew this man. This man was an adversary to God's ways. This challenge triggers all that follows. This man was meeting with the sons of God. He had come to present himself before the LORD. No doubt to all outward appearances he was a righteous man but evidently God knew that his heart was not aligned with God. He needed to change his ways. He was not living the way Job was living. And why did God challenge him? Why does He challenge us? Clearly, it is because God wants us to learn that His ways are better than our ways and that bringing our thinking and our ways into harmony with His principles and the Scriptural examples of godly lives of those who have gone before will save us. God wants to save us. **He wanted to save Satan.**

SO IT BEGINS

Over time, things were put into a better context for me with the realization that all the horrors about to befall Job were for a far higher purpose than just chastising Job for the wrong things he said in the depths of his trial. We know all men fall short of the glory of God. To suffer trials in this life is one thing, but

the idea that God gave Satan extreme powers to inflict these intense ordeals on Job, was hard for me to come to grips with. Perhaps it has been difficult for you as well. Thinking of Job's trials as being primarily to save someone else was a better context in which to view their severity. Our stubborn insistence in rebellion has brought many disasters upon us all.

JESUS AND THE DEVIL

Much later on, I was struck by the similarity between Job's confrontation with Satan and our Savior's confrontation with the devil in the wilderness. We have all heard at least two possible explanations of this critically important event. One was that the devil was a man, perhaps the High Priest, and the other that he was not an actual person, but that this is the record of what was going on in Jesus' mind. Let me stipulate here that regardless of the source of the temptation, ultimately the contest is played out in Jesus' mind, where his decisions, like our own, have to be taken.

The possibility that the devil could not have been a man like the rest of us has been dismissed by many brethren

Wilderness outside of the Jordan Valley in Israel

because he took Jesus to a high mountain where he could see all the kingdoms of this world. However, in light of all that Satan was empowered by God to do in the Book of Job, a literal understanding shouldn't be too readily dismissed.

JOB AND JESUS

The similarity between Job's trials and our Lord's is really striking. Consistent with our Christadelphian understanding, Jesus was a man, with the same nature that we share, along with Job. In both cases, we see extreme trial and suffering permitted by God because of His love for men who are, from time to time, very averse to His ways. Both Job and

Jesus learned from their sufferings. Job, at the end of his trials when confronted by God, said, "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." (Job 42:3). "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6). And of Jesus it is said, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience

by the things that he suffered." (Heb 5:8) They are both examples of godly men whose lives were used by God as teaching examples for us. What we see through this lens helps us understand why God permitted Job's extreme trials and why God allowed the only sinless man who ever lived, His Son, Jesus, to

suffer and die.

GOD DID IT FOR US

In a very real sense, the Satan in Job and the devil who tempted Jesus embodied and manifested words and actions that are the same as the natural product of our own adverse natures when we act in ways opposed to God. All of us, including Job, but with the one exception in Jesus, have manifested this Satan characteristic in our words and deeds in the course of our lives.

Many of us had thought it was Satan all along. We thought it was someone who really hated Job. We may be right that Satan was the cause, but it may be we were right for the wrong reasons. We never thought of ourselves as "Satan" in Job or as the devil on the mountain with Jesus.

Had that man in Job, and we in our generation, not been so extremely averse to God's instructions, it is reasonable to conclude that Job's and Jesus' suffering would have been much less. This is so evident in Job 2 where God confronts Satan with the evidence of Job's continued faithfulness, even after that first horrible round of sufferings wherein Job is financially wiped out and his children are crushed when their house is blown down upon them. Satan dismisses Job's trial as unconvincing which results in another round of trials and Job's health being ruined. And still Job is faithful. Satan, like us, is very hard to reach.

A few years ago, I heard "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord" sung by the Statler Brothers. It is odd how some things, at given times, will resonate with you so powerfully. There is nothing profound in the words, but for some reason it hit me that, in

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a very meaningful way, I was there when they crucified my Lord. Not just me of course, it was all of us. But lest I overlook my main point, it is good for me to remind myself that I am a very real part of the problem. My sinfulness, our sinfulness, necessitated Jesus' whole ordeal. We were the *raison d'être* for his whole mission. God was reaching out to me even as he was trying to reach the Satan in Job. How I stood in Satan's place in Job and in the devil's place in Jesus' temptations came into focus, and I doubt I'll be able to read those two accounts again and not see myself in representation.

As Isaiah said:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned everyone to his own way; And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa 53:5-6)

EPILOGUE

The Book of Job has many more lessons for us we have not considered here. We are encouraged to be faithful no matter what happens in our lives. We learn what not to say to our loved ones in trial. It is so important not to ascribe reasons and motives to our brother or sister's experiences and actions. We

can have an opinion about actions but speculation about the "why" and the "motive" is just that, speculation.

God is working in this world and in our lives in miraculous ways. Job did not know about God's workings with Satan. We learn from this a very important and practical lesson for our own lives when trials occur. It is important to examine ourselves, as Job considered whether or not he had done something that merited severe chastisement. Often times we cause our own problems and that becomes very evident in the light of trial. But sometimes it is not clear. Job went a bit too far when he began to question God's fairness, God's righteousness. Perhaps we can see in the Book of Job some of the answers to the age-old question that weighs on so many serious minds: why is someone we know and love, or ourselves perhaps, going through so much trial? The answer may be that this trial, as was the trial of Job, is an outworking of the invisible hand of God—and God loves us very much. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."* (Rom 8:28).

With that assurance, we can leave off potentially unprofitable speculation. God truly loves us.

Ken Sommerville,
(Simi Hills, CA)

CUT OFF THE BLOOD SUPPLY TO SIN

By Dave Jennings

THE battle against sin is the foundational theme of our salvation. All men have sinned, and there is not one of us that can boast of their own righteousness. We are completely in need of the grace of God and His strength in our lives.

Yet, we are expected to resist sin. Paul wrote, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein.”* (Rom 6:1-2). There can be a defeatist and unhelpful attitude we might develop about our frailties. Since we are weak and are completely dependent on the grace of God, the commitment to strive for obedience can be marginalized if we think incorrectly about this matter. In Hebrews 12:14, we are told that we are to *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* God expects us to follow holiness today and to make the battle against sin our objective in life.

But how do we do this? How do we deaden the impulses of the flesh and truly serve our God? Paul addresses this in Colossians 3:5 when he exhorts believers to *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and*

covetousness, which is idolatry.” The word we would like to look more closely at is *“mortify.”* Modern translations use *“put to death”* rather than mortify, which is helpful. The Greek word is *“nekroo.”* From this Greek word we are familiar with the terrible medical condition of necrosis. Necrosis is when living tissue is dying, usually because blood is no longer being supplied to it.

The challenge to us in our fight against sin is to cut off the blood supply, so to speak. Stop feeding the flesh and it will eventually mortify or necrose. When we avoid exposure to the *“pollutions of the world”* (2 Pet 2:20), when we choose not to tread near areas of temptation, we can, by the grace of God, actually deaden the influence of the flesh and better pursue holiness. As grotesque as a dying and necrosed organ might be, this is exactly the target we are looking for spiritually in our fight against sin. Solomon wrote, *“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”* (Prov 4:14-15). In a spiritual sense, we need to commit to necrosis of the flesh. Deaden it by cutting off its blood supply, and by not feeding it, and it can be more effectively subdued.

Dave Jennings

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Brother Editor,

I read the Tidings article, “*An Examination of Tarshish in the Scriptures*” by Jonathan Farrar, on the tidings.org website, posted October 6, 2020, with some incredulity, particularly the section, “Tarshish as Britain,” and in particular subsection 4, “Tarshish traded tin with Tyre.”

In this section, the author quotes the statement, “There is no historical evidence that the Phoenicians ever visited Britain.” He continues to quote extensively from Prof. T. Champion: “The direct archaeological evidence for the presence of Phoenician or Carthaginian traders as far north as Britain is non-existent, and the most recent review of Phoenician activity in the west does not even bother to consider the question (Aubert 1993).” Also, “Professor Champion continues to affirm the lack of evidence for a Phoenician presence in Britain.”

But is this a true state of affairs? So, I referred to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and there Henry Bolzon, Editor of Beyond Britannica, wrote on June 26, 2020, in an answer to the question from a correspondent, “Did the ancient Phoenicians reach Cornwall?” His reply to the inquirer was as follows: “The Phoenicians, it appears did reach Cornwall, from, at least, 2000 BC, perhaps earlier. Below are sources I’ve cited that give an idea of what has occurred with the Phoenicians

and their contact with Cornwall and Brittany:”

<https://beyond.britannica.com/did-the-ancient-phoenicians-reach-cornwall>

Here he lists several reasons for his viewpoint. I have searched for other sources and offered them here for consideration.

- It would appear from the evidence, that mining in Britain and Ireland was contemporaneous with Abraham and possibly, over a thousand years before Jonah caught a ship to Tarshish. There is clear evidence of the mining and smelting of tin, in the form of alluvial deposits of Cassiterites, in Cornwall indicating that the ingots were produced there.
- There are remains of Mediterranean type ships off the south coast of Britain and what appears to be a Phoenician harbor at Poole, Dorset, and what may have been a Phoenician trading post in Thanet, Kent.
- A number of Carthaginian coins have been found scattered all over the UK, indicative of widespread trade around Britain from the Atlantic coast along the English Channel to the North Sea.
- Studies on tin isotopes have proved that tin and gold found in the Nebra Sky Disk in Germany and thought to come from its local mines originally, is now proven to be from Cornwall.

Tin ingots found from five sites in the eastern Mediterranean on ancient shipwrecks, including importantly those found off the coast of Israel, point to Cornish tin ores as the most likely sources for the 13th - 12th BC ingots.

- There is evidence of imported artifacts found from the sea, and coastal areas, ranging from Thanet in the East, Poole, Salcombe, Plymouth, to Falmouth in the west, the Severn estuary bordering South Wales, along the coast up to North Wales and other locations around the UK and Ireland. In addition to the shipwrecks and ingots in the eastern

Mediterranean, this all points to shipping and trade with several powers, including Israel, continued from the first millennium BC up until the Roman conquest of Britain and Mediterranean Europe and its control over the sea.

“Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.” (Ezek 27:12).

*Trevor Hanson,
(Birmingham South, UK)*

Reply by Bro. Farrar

Traditionally Christadelphians have associated Tarshish with England. Perhaps the key reason for this association is that tin has been mined in Cornwall in southwestern England. The logic goes something like this: Since Tarshish traded tin with Tyre (Ezek 27:12), and since Tyre is the ancient capital of the Phoenicians, and since the Phoenicians obtained tin in Cornwall, Tarshish must be England.

However, historians and archaeologists do not all agree that the Phoenicians obtained tin in Cornwall or even reached England. If the Phoenicians never reached England, the association between Tarshish and England is tenuous at best.

In my article, I provided several examples of recent scholarship suggesting that the Phoenicians did

not reach England and that there were other, more accessible sources of tin in the Mediterranean basin that could have supplied tin to Tyre.

I was not suggesting that tin was never mined in Cornwall; it most definitely was. Bro. Hanson has identified several examples. As well, there are museums in southwestern England with permanent displays of tin ingots mined in Cornwall, and it is possible to visit tin mines in Cornwall. However, that tin was mined in Cornwall does not “prove” that Tarshish is Britain.

In my article, I mention in a footnote a recent book, published in 2018 by a British historian, entitled, *“In Search of the Phoenicians.”* I did not quote from this book, but the author in part makes the case that the Phoenicians were a widespread group of culturally diverse people without a homeland; that the Greek historian Herodotus seems to

have coined the term “Phoenician”; and that the first “Phoenician” was probably Heliodorus of Emesa from the third or fourth century AD. The last chapter of the book is entitled, “Phoenician Islands,” which I would refer to interested readers (as well as the other scholarship I cited).

More traditional sources of information about the Phoenicians, such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, do not refer to this dissenting scholarship, as it is relatively recent and not mainstream. However, that is not a reason to be dismissive without a careful read. Moreover, the Bible should be our primary source of study about itself, which is why in the first part of my article, I examined all the Scriptures containing a reference to Tarshish in which I tried to compare Scripture

with Scripture. My conclusion after undertaking this comparison is that there are multiple locations named “Tarshish” and that it is impossible to clearly identify Tarshish with a particular location. For this reason alone, a dogmatic identification that Tarshish is a particular nation or place does not seem well supported.

The identification of Tarshish in Bible prophecy is not a matter of eternal salvation, and there are different perspectives. I had always assumed that Tarshish was Britain, as that is the only viewpoint I had read or heard until I did some personal study on this topic.

*Jonathan Farrar,
(Paris, ON, Unamended)*

Panormaic shot of the rugged walk up to Rough Tor on Bodmin Moor, the second highest point in Cornwall, England





PREACHING AND TEACHING

COSTA RICA CONFERENCE

By David Collister

THIS year has been anything but normal, and as with most of our ecclesial gatherings of late, the Costa Rican brothers and sisters decided months ago to hold their conference in a virtual format. This required preparation of another type. Instead of booking a campground and putting together the details of holding a camp in person, they were tasked with putting together a conference that followed as closely as possible their usual format to provide spiritual enrichment for all in attendance, from seasoned brothers and sisters to the very young. They

did a wonderful job and those who attended greatly benefitted.

Bro. Dennis Paggi (Verdugo Hills, CA) was the main speaker for the weekend, which this year was held from the 24th through the 27th of December. Bro. Dennis prepared his four classes and exhortation to follow the theme of the conference, “Our Priorities.” In his first class, he used the book of Romans as a basis to speak about our duty as believers to become living sacrifices and showed what that meant in practical terms. In his second class, he covered the topic of being separate

from the world careful to avoid idolatry in the form of covetousness. The third class dealt with the metamorphosis we undergo in our spiritual lives and our cycle of growth. His fourth and final class dealt with the way sin traps us and how God provides us an escape. In his exhortation, he spoke on the phrase, “*Here I am*” and brought out how if we are ready to serve God, He is ready to do whatever is necessary to help us toward salvation.

The Costa Rican brothers and sisters always do a wonderful job of providing for the many different age groups and interests of the attendees, and this year was no exception. In addition to the adult classes, there were classes for the younger children by Sis. Norma Shankour (Verdugo Hills, CA). Classes for the 8-12 year olds were led by Sis. Marcela Castellanos (Honduras). Classes for the young people were led by Bro. Lucas Gener (Argentina). Bro. David Collister (Verdugo Hills, CA) gave a brothers’ class on the topic “You Are the Temple of God,” explaining

that the priority of the brethren must be in providing a good example to the ecclesia. Sis. Marisol Araya (Costa Rica) gave a sisters’ class on the topic, “Our Priorities: Some Examples of Women of the Bible.” There was a craft session on the first day which was well-liked, as well as some Bible games and a movie with an inspirational theme. The last night of the conference ended with a virtual bonfire, where we gathered around our computers with snacks and shared some games and singing of hymns. There was even a virtual “bonfire” on the screen.

Sunday morning was very special this year, beginning with four baptisms. Roy Eliécer Alfaro Rojas, Gladys Chavarria Pérez, Guiselle Arias Picado, and Maricel Vargas Arias (Costa Rica) were all baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ. The baptisms led right into the memorial service. It was a wonderful start to the last day of the conference. The rest of the day consisted of the fourth class by Bro. Dennis, and then a closing session in





which a Bible knowledge game was played, and then final goodbyes were said.

The conference was a very enriching experience, and many expressed how they so appreciated coming together from many different countries to share and build each other up in the faith we all share. The feeling of brotherhood was strong, and the fact that it is

possible to share in activities from afar helped to quell the sadness at saying goodbye at the end of a wonderful three days. Many brothers and sisters worked tirelessly before and during the conference to make sure it all came together seamlessly. There was even a wonderful video of the activities during the conference. Work was also done after the conference to provide access to the content of the weekend through links to videos. We so appreciate the efforts of all those who worked hard to make this conference a success, including the committee, the teachers, those who organized the activities, and all who participated.

*Written by David Collister, CBMA
Link for Costa Rica,
Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/C Publicity*

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the
garden
OUTREACH INITIATIVES

By Analiese Beeler

THIS winter, The Garden Outreach Project was blessed with both the support of the WCF and the engagement of the Christadelphian community in launching our first National Outreach Initiative! For those unfamiliar with the Bags of Love Appeal, we organized the ordering and shipping of 20 sleeping bags to each participating ecclesia, which then delivered the sleeping bags to a local charity or shelter of their choice. Additionally, personalized pamphlets and cards were offered to be given along with the sleeping bags. Alternatively, we offered a \$250 reimbursement for the creation of care packs for those currently affected by homelessness, which were also delivered to local charities for distribution.

We at The Garden have certainly felt as though God's hand has been with us throughout this first appeal. To date, we have had 38 ecclesial/group orders for a grand total of 745 distributed sleeping bags. The Winter Appeal has reached thirteen states and three provinces, with 20 orders from the US and 18 from Canada. Furthermore, five ecclesias were reimbursed for creating around 150 care packs to donate to homeless shelters.

Not only has the response of the Christadelphian community been incredibly encouraging, but the responses of those who received and distributed the sleeping bags has reminded us of how ever-present Yahweh is. Between directly answered prayers, and immediately served locals, we praise God for everything that He has worked in us all. As our very first Outreach Initiative, we came to anticipate the occasional misstep and dropped detail on our part; we didn't, however, fully understand the outpouring of support, grace, and love you, our brothers and sisters, would show. We pray that God will continue to bless our collective efforts to love in deed and in truth.

Following, we have included the Pittsburgh Ecclesia's Winter Appeal write-up. For some much needed encouragement in these historic times, the rest of the Winter Appeal stories can be found on our website at: **www.thegardenoutreach.org/the-stories/**

Pittsburgh is known as the "City of Bridges." There are 446 of them that cross three major rivers: the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio. In fact, there are more bridges here

than any other city in the world. Even Venice, Italy has fewer.

As Christadelphians we all are in the business of bridge building—both interpersonally and spiritually. That’s why it felt good for members of The Outreach Committee of the Pittsburgh Ecclesia when we connected with Suzanna Mower who runs an organization she calls “Saturday Suppers.” She works with an interfaith network of churches and volunteers to do far more than distribute meals to the homeless (who often shelter under the bridges and overpasses of Pittsburgh) every Saturday. Here’s a description in her own words:

“We are an organization that goes out and feeds the streets. Essentially, we believe that when you feed the body it opens the soul to wishfully receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. I feel called to the lost in the streets of Pittsburgh and the broken. We are connected with a number of other volunteers and organizations to do what we do... Every Saturday I come out with volunteers and we serve 80-100 hot, hearty and nutritious meals, along with other essential items such as deodorant, toothpaste, brushes, underwear, socks, gloves, handwarmers and blankets among other things. Basically, anything they need, I try and get. I believe these people, as problematic as

society sees them... still need and deserve love, [need to be] looked in the eyes and told Jesus loves them.... Blessings, blessings and more blessings to you and your congregation!”

We met outside the Pittsburgh Chapel on Saturday, December 5, to transfer the 20 sleeping bags from The Garden to Suzanna’s van. The bags all had a tag with our contact information and a Tidings pamphlet inserted inside. They were sent on their way with Suzanna, soon to be distributed along with a hot meal and other necessities. She invited us to ride along one day, another eye-opening bridge to be crossed. We were reminded of the instructions to the ecclesia at Colossae:

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.... And above all these, put on love, which binds [bridges] everything together in perfect harmony.” (Col 3: 12, 14 ESV).

Please visit our website to discover more about our first initiative for 2021: our Knit-2-Gether project: <https://thegardenoutreach.org/national-projects/knit-2-gether-2021/>

To donate to The Garden Outreach Project, go to:

www.thegardenoutreach.org/donate



NEWS & UPDATES

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

The Greenaway Ecclesia has been meeting online on Go-To-Meeting since March 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. While we were still able to remain open during this time as long as we followed the restrictions that applied to our region, we felt that the safest thing for our members and community was to close our hall and meet online.

During this time, we have been able to share in fellowship online with several of our brothers and sisters throughout our community over the 2020 year. We meet regularly with refugee brothers and sisters from Sri Lanka, a non-resident brother from Germany and a non-resident brother and sister from Nova Scotia.

The Greenaway Ecclesia would like to thank all of our online guests and visitors and our brothers that encouraged us with words of exhortation. We thank these brothers and sisters for their involvement.

We welcome our newest members at Greenaway, Bro. John and Sis. Dianne Drywood who transferred from the Hamilton Book Road, ON Ecclesia.

Bro. Scott Lausch and Bro. Brad Baker have withdrawn their fellowship from Greenaway and the Christadelphian community.

For those that would like to join us for Memorial Meeting or for Wednesday evening readings we continue to meet online on Go-To-Meeting. Our Memorial Meeting is Sunday at 10am and our Wednesday class starts at 7:30pm on Go-To-Meeting. Please contact Bro. Mark Jennings by phone at: 905-578-1038 or by email at: jenningsmark@rogers.com if you would like to join us online and we will provide the Go-To-Meeting link. All plans are subject to the will of our heavenly Father.

Mark Jennings

Brothers, sisters and young people, I am very excited as I assume the role as Chairman of the Tidings.

Our mission focuses on building the faith of individuals and ecclesias as a untied community to the Glory of God. This can only be achieved if each of us lives the principles of truth everyday.

“O children, we must not love only with word, or with the tongue, but also in truth and action.” - 1 John 3:18

With God’s blessing, we intend on sharing the joy of the Hope we have with a genuine enthusiasm that excites our readers and listeners to be motivated to open the Word of God on a daily basis as it contains the words of eternal life.

Alan Markwith



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WWW.TIDINGS.ORG

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