



TIDINGS

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POLITICS & SKEPTICISM

Abstinence from politics is fundamental to our identity as Christadelphians, and is based on sound Scriptural teaching.



Alan Markwith (Hamilton Greenaway Ecclesia, ON)

Big Bear, CA

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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Building faith in the Christadelphian community.

TIDINGS

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EDITORIAL

FREEDOM FROM FEAR OF DEATH

By Dave Jennings

WE all take great confidence in knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ will raise the dead and judge the “*quick and dead at his appearing and his kingdom.*” (2 Tim 4:1). Isaiah spoke of how the gospel message would “*proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*” (Isa 61:1). Our common hope is that Jesus will return soon and deliver the faithful from sin and death. The prison house of the grave will no longer hold those who have died in hope.

However, the freedom our Lord offers is not only at his appearing. He also offers a life-changing confidence that can change our perspective of life—and death. It was Jesus who said, “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*” (John 14:27). The Apostle Paul wrote of this gift of freedom from fear.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:14-15 ESV).

As I enter my late sixties, I am becoming more accustomed to finding death within me. Earlier in my life, sickness and poor health were merely a rude interruption. Death was a certainty, but it seemed distant and a more philosophical consideration. As I’ve aged, there are ongoing, nagging differences in my body, my vision, my hearing (just ask my wife!). To be honest, it makes me dread what lies ahead, whether it be a few years or a couple of decades. Those of us who are past our physical prime know the drill.

Backs that once were limber and elastic, now slowly and painfully straighten. Sleep, once uninterrupted and sweet, is disturbed often by the “*voice of the bird.*” (Eccl 12:4). Solomon aptly describes many of the experiences of the “*evil days.*” We can choose to view these as “medical problems,” or we can see them as Divine messages, helping us to acknowledge that everything about this life is temporary, fleeting.

When I read Hebrews chapter 2 a couple of weeks ago, it led me to think about my own fears. Am I afraid of death? Am I living in detention when the prison door has already been unlocked? Clearly for me, the answer was yes.

The Lord’s victory over sin teaches me that I have **already** been delivered from the slavery of the fear of death. My acceptance of this, from a doctrinal point of view, has never been shaken. I fundamentally believe that the Lord will return and raise me from my grave, along with all other faithful from over the centuries. I do not fear the grave the same as those without hope. But there seems to be something more that Jesus delivered us from. It is a freedom of mind, a comfort in the way we face our mortality.

I’ve had two experiences where I was in the presence of one who was dying. One, a faithful brother, who did not expect that day would be the day of his death. The other was my dear mother, who after a lengthy battle with cancer was ready to close her eyes in sleep. These were deeply spiritual experiences for me. There is a clarity about one’s faith when you see death. One understands at a visceral level that we are powerless over death. It is an acknowledgement that goes beyond the first principles

governing death. It is a personal reminder of the absolute reliance that we have on our Lord.

I have often wondered why I have been so hopeful that the Lord would return in my lifetime. I remember a brother, long since asleep, telling me that he believed Jesus would return before he passed, resulting in him never having to experience death. In retrospect, his reasoning and motivation may be inconsistent with our freedom from the *"fear of death."* We are told that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."* (1 Cor 15:50). I don't know what this glorious experience will be like, but it certainly is a cessation of a mortal body, being replaced with a spiritual body. Does that change occur *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"*? Perhaps. But for those who slept in Christ over the centuries, the momentary cessation of consciousness matches their same experience. Change must occur. *"This corruptible must put on incorruption."* (1 Cor 15:53). The concept of never dying seems inconsistent with the change we must all face, and it seems connected in a way to the fear of death.

I take courage when I read about the confidence that faithful men and women in Scripture had in God when they faced death. Joshua, at the age of 110, declared, *"I am going the way of all the earth."* (Josh 23:14). The Apostle Paul, yet in reasonable health, faced a certain death at the hands of the Romans. But, as he wrote to Timothy, he reassured him that he was *"ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course; I have kept the faith."* (2 Tim 4:6). In these cases, and many others, the knowledge

that life was about to end was clear. These great men of faith were at peace. There was no fear of death. Their focus and treasure were on the day when their eyes would open again to a life that *"eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man."* (1 Cor 2:9).

In Eden, part of the appeal of the message of the serpent was *"Ye shall not surely die."* (Gen 3:4). Since Eden, men have shared in the mistruth of that statement. Interestingly, one of the consequences of sin was the curse of the ground. In Genesis 3, we are told *"Cursed is the ground for thy sake."* (Gen 3:17). Why were the curse of thorns and thistles helpful for the *"sake"* of Adam? During his labors as a farmer, he would struggle every day with the consequences of sin. Adam would labor *"by the sweat of thy face"* to eat bread. It would no longer be as it was in the Garden. He would feel in his life the progressive effects of the curse. There was a constant reminder of his mortality and the consequences of sin. It reminded him every day of his need for redemption.

Not all believers, or their families, will have the blessing of long life. Sadly, it seems too often that promising people are removed from our lives, and we find ourselves searching for answers we may never get in this life. David was in great distress for the untimely loss of his *"brother Jonathan."* (2 Sam 1:26). Jonathan was greatly loved by David, and between them they had determined that when David would become king, Jonathan would be second to him (1 Sam 23:17). What a helpful friend and counselor Jonathan would have been during the troublesome times that David would face in the future. Yet, as we



move forward into 2 Samuel, we can see terrible events from which Jonathan was spared. He was not there to experience the hanging of his half-brothers and nephews by the Gibeonites due to his father's trespass at Nob (1 Sam 22:19). God is the righteous Judge, and we must trust that He knows what is best, even if it doesn't make sense to us during the time of grief. Isaiah wrote, *"Good people pass away; the godly often die before their time. But no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die."* (Isa 57:1-2 NLT).

What happens to our perspective of life when we fear death? The Apostle John wrote that *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."* (1 John 4:18). How could my fear of death torment me and prevent me from embracing love?

When I fear death, my heart is not fully at peace. It brings anxiety about my death and the passing of my loved ones

and brothers and sisters in Christ. But John tells us that it also prevents love from fully developing. How does that happen?

A very good friend of mine has been facing a dreadful, and potentially fatal disease. We are close in age, and we have worked together in the Truth for many years. So, when he was diagnosed with his disease, I was fearful of losing my friend. I am so thankful that our Lord has extended his life. But I was deeply moved by what he told me about facing the real prospect of death. He said that his disease has been a blessing! It has brought him closer to God, and helped him to be much more aware of His strength and mercies. As I reflected on this, I realized that my friend had, indeed, been freed from the prison house of the fear of death. He wasn't locked away, anxiously fretting about what might be coming in the days ahead. Rather, it helped him increase his appreciation, reliance and love for God. For where fear is absent, love can grow.

A lovely sister described to me the last moments of her husband's life. "He was

a multigenerational Christadelphian. Yet he was very fearful of his death. He was not certain of the mercy of God, nor of his standing in the sight of God. I fear he must have lived in 'bondage' although he never revealed this until his final hours."

The thoughts our sister shared seems to get to the heart of the fear of death for many. It involves an uncertainty about our relationship with God. It is a fear of judgment, along with a feeling of unworthiness. I am sure we have all struggled with such feelings. But as we assess this problem, we can see clearly how such a feeling might generate within us a legalistic torment to try to be more loveable to our God. If we could just be a bit more holy, then we would feel more confident to face the Judgment Seat. Such thinking fails to comprehend the love of God and his grace. In fact, He loved us *"while we were yet sinners."* (Rom 5:8). It is the Father's *"good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12:32). We are encouraged, as believers, to have confidence that we are in an active relationship with the Father and Son today. It is that relationship where we can see the love and manifestation of our Lord (John 14:21).

When we comprehend the grace of God, we need not fear. David wrote about the prospect of the fear of death and he said, *"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."* (Psa 23:3-4).

The reason we can face our own mortality is because we can fundamentally know that the Lord is with us, leading us beside still waters. He is with us during

the spring of youth, as well as the closing days of winter. Paul wrote that, *"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* (Col 3:3-4). The word *"hid"* is instructive. It is *krupto*, which has been translated *"to cover or conceal."* With fleshly vision, we are incapable of seeing how we are being hidden away for future glory. All we see is decline. Such vision can only bring about anxiety and fear. But through the eye of faith, we can have confidence that our Lord intends to have us *"appear with him in glory."* The evidence of this today is our relationship with our Lord, and our knowledge of him working in our lives. It is confidence in our Lord, not ourselves.

The fear of death, which can obsess unbelievers, is what Jesus died to liberate us from. It is an acknowledgement of his love for us. *"For that is what God is like. He is our God forever and ever, and he will guide us until we die."* (Psa 48:14 NLT).

Our Lord faced his own death, resolute on the *"joy that was set before him."* (Heb 12:2). Today we are blessed to have our hope as a *"treasure in earthen vessels."* (2 Cor 4:7). Through the mercy and love of our God, we can now look beyond these fragile mortal bodies. Through faith, we see the day when *"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."* (Rev 21:4).

Dave Jennings



WITCHCRAFT

By Tychicus Mbuve

Editor's Note: *The Tidings* is committed to sharing information with our readers about our global community. This article, from Bro. Mbuve of Kenya, describes a very real challenge to some ecclesias in Africa. It is clear that each region of the world has its unique complications from the local culture. We certainly have our own in Western society, such as nationalism, patriotism, and materialism.

WITCHCRAFT is a widespread and grave issue in African culture, and in other countries around the world. African media, including news, entertainment, and even magic programs on satellite TV, describe witchcraft as a dangerous threat that needs to be confronted. African ecclesias also face the challenge of witchcraft. In this article we would like to examine the implications of witchcraft on our lives as believers, whether witchcraft really exists, and does it work?

The African View on Witchcraft

Witchcraft is the exercise or invocation of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events using sorcery or magic.¹ A witch, sorcerer, or magician attempts to influence the surrounding world through occult means, meaning hidden, as opposed to open and observable.

African Christian tradition believes witches' malevolent power is derived from a special relationship with an evil spirit with whom they have a "pact." Or they exercise it through animal or

object familiars (assistants or agents) such as hyenas, owls, baboons, dolls or carved images.²

Some Africans believe that evil deeds can be wrought by using spells, potions, and powerful magic. But in many African cultures, the witch's power is thought to be based in his or her own body. It can be activated by consciously wishing someone ill, and is thus an unspoken, or implicit curse. Witches are also believed to act unconsciously and are unaware of the ill they cause. Their intense urge for evil merely seeps into those around them. An increasing number of Africans are falsely accused of witchcraft but are not conscious of wishing anyone ill. They are forced to assume they unknowingly did what is attributed to them.^{1,2}

African culture considers witchcraft both valuable and evil. It is valuable in the sense that it provides the necessary power to protect the family. Yet the

evil side of witchcraft is viewed as the source of all ills. Witches and sorcerers are regularly credited with causing all sorts of disease and disaster such as sickness, death, and a myriad of lesser misfortunes. They are cited to explain failure in school exams, epidemics, elections, crop failures, infertility, lightning strikes, or even difficulties finding employment. In African culture, there is a cause for everything, and witchcraft is held responsible when rational knowledge fails to explain disasters and loss.^{1,2,3}

The Cost of African-Christian Witchcraft

Today, Christian, and African views on witchcraft are increasingly being merged into a toxic belief system. There is a cost both monetarily and in human life. For a fee, Christian pastors claim the ability to identify witches in a community. For a further fee they will exorcise spirits and powers from





alleged witches, profiting from fearful and already poor individuals.³

In a recently disturbing trend, especially in Nigeria, children or young orphans are often accused by pastors of being child witches and then tortured or killed by church family members following the Biblical exhortation *“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”* (Exod 22:18) Alternatively, parents may abandon them and leave them to survive in the streets.^{4,5} In Kenya, four older women were recently accused of being witches for bewitching and muting a school student. They were lynched and murdered by an angry, blood-thirsty mob from their community.⁶ It is also reported that “thousands of elderly Tanzanian women have been strangled, knifed to death and burned alive over the last two decades after being denounced as witches.”⁷ In many countries, women are still accused of practicing witchcraft each year. “They are persecuted and even killed in organized witch hunts—especially in Africa, but also in Southeast Asia and Latin America.”⁸

Witchcraft and Christadelphians

To an extent, even some Christadelphians in Africa are caught up believing witchcraft as a supernatural power. The impact on ecclesias can be profoundly serious. Brothers, sisters, and young people can be fearful of being bewitched by fellow believers. They may avoid contact with them, or even negate attendance at the ecclesia to avoid being harmed or harming others if they are perceived as having witch-like powers. This may also inhibit one from correcting a brother or a sister who has gone astray in their Bible teachings for fear of being the subject of malignant powers or spirits, whether consciously or unconsciously. They may be shunned by local villagers and unable to preach the truth, or worse yet, suffer persecution. Furthermore, believers may feel compelled to spend money they do not have to deal with issues of witchcraft.

As a community in Christ, we know all this false belief is contrary to the Bible. God teaches us clearly that He is in control of all things in this world, whether good or bad. He is all-

powerful, all-seeing, and everywhere present. Paul taught the first century believers that *“There is no power but of God,”* (Rom 13:1), and *“An idol has no real existence... there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.”* (1 Cor 8:4-6 ESV). God is in complete control and is the source of all power in this universe.

Simon the Sorcerer illustrates an additional concern that these alleged powers can present to believers. Simon originally practiced witchcraft *“saying that he himself was somebody great... [and the people said] this man is the power of God that is called Great.”* (Acts 8:9-10 ESV). Simon was more concerned with personal gain, god-making and praise than he was in imputing his powers or those of the apostles and the Holy Spirit to God. The Apostle Peter understood his true intentions and rebuked him for *“this wickedness of yours.”* (Acts 8:22). When we work in the ecclesia, it is important that we humbly ascribe all talents or abilities we have to the God who has granted them to us.

When brothers and sisters believe or practice in witchcraft, it undermines the ultimate power of a God who created everything in the universe, and His ability to guide and work in our lives, whether through good experiences or bad.

Biblical Definition of Witchcraft

Is witchcraft discussed in the Bible? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew language describes witches as practitioners of magic and jugglers who pretend through skill in occult science to reveal the future and manipulate life events. God condemns Manasseh, the eldest son of King Hezekiah, for

promoting and participating in a variety of related practices, such as observing times, using enchantments and witchcraft, dealing with familiar spirits and wizards, and worshiping the power of images and idols (2 Chr 33:6-7). God abhorred these *“abominations of the heathen”* (v2) and repeatedly declares their power to be nothing.

In the New Testament Paul identifies several *“works of the flesh”* including



Luxor Temple courtyard and the statues of Ramses II, Egypt

“idolatry and witchcraft.” (Gal 5:19). The Greek word for witchcraft is *pharmakeia*, Strong’s 5331, which is the origin of the English word for pharmacist. In other words, witchcraft was akin to someone who provided first-century drugs, spells or potions and attributed unexplained happenings to something other than God. Metaphorically, it refers to the deception and seduction of idolatry and witchcraft. Paul even equates this

practice with other obvious immoral behavior and reveals that *“Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (Gal 5:21 NIV).

In the Revelation, this same Greek word is used to describe the practices of heathen systems that God will destroy in preparation for his Kingdom on earth (Rev 9:21; 18:23; 21:8). Instead of wasting time and money on practices



to objects that have no power and are godless, He wants us to follow Him so that He can say, *“I will be his God.”* (Rev 21:7).

The Law and Witchcraft

God provides several commands about witchcraft shortly after Israel left Egypt. Egypt had been a nation steeped in a culture of mysticism. Moses and Aaron had personally confronted Pharaoh's magicians to contrast their

powerlessness with the majesty of God during a protracted appeal to *“Let my people go.”* (Exod 5:1-3). Through these demonstrations, both Israel and Egypt were to recognize that only God was all-powerful. They could trust in Him to take care of them, control weather and events, and did not need to fear other supposed powers.

Furthermore, the Canaanites were also steeped in the worship of pagan gods and behavior associated with witchcraft. As they prepared to enter and cleanse this land, God issues explicit instructions: *“Thou shall not suffer [permit] a witch to live.”* (Exod 22:18). This is a strong expression which God repeats in Lev 20:27 and is used to prevent any false sympathy or misplaced tenderness towards a person of such character. Instead, these individuals were to be rooted out from among the Israelites because witchcraft was considered a capital offence, and an act of rebellion against God and His authority. It was direct opposition to God. Any form of witchcraft practice was strongly opposed in Israel because it implied a use of the supernatural outside of, and hostile to, the power of God.

Shortly after, God reiterates the same explicit instruction: *“Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them.”* (Lev 19:31 ESV). And later, He commands *“Let no one be found among you... who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.”* (Deut 18:10-11 NIV). These practices and people

were “detestable to the LORD.” (v. 12). Instead, He emphasizes in the context of both verses that He wanted Israel (and us) to appreciate His sovereignty and unrivalled powers: “I am the LORD your God.” (Lev 19:31; 20:24).

What are the principles we can take from the Law of Moses regarding witchcraft? There are four.

1. The LORD demands absolute loyalty and does not tolerate any involvement with other gods or spirits.
2. Israel’s God was the only all-powerful God.
3. Those who use witchcraft, sorcery, familiar spirits, or associated practices are opposing God.
4. Practitioners of witchcraft were to be exterminated.

Saul and Jacob—Tempted by Witchcraft

God also demonstrates His abhorrence for witchcraft in the life of King Saul. In 1 Samuel 28, the Philistine army confronts Saul, and his heart is filled with fear. Israel was in grave danger and Saul was in desperate need of military advice. He turns first to the LORD, however, because of his earlier disobedience to God, he did not receive an answer (v. 6).

Desperate for direction, Saul then turns to witchcraft: “Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her.” (v. 7). Saul’s actions cannot be condoned, and they demonstrate how desperation and impatience can lead to similar sins in our own lives. Earlier, Saul had “put

away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land” (v. 3), upholding God’s laws that stringently opposed their existence. Ironically, he now returns to these very practices, though Samuel had warned Saul that “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” (1 Sam 15:23). By disobeying God, and consulting a witch, Saul had now sinned in both arenas. Chronicles confirms that he died on both accounts (1 Chr 10:13). If we disobey God and uphold powers other than God’s, we will also distance ourselves from the all-powerful God of this world.

Jacob is another example of someone tempted with the option of witchcraft. But he responded differently than Saul. Genesis suggests that Laban and his daughters were influenced by magic and divination. Leah, his mother, and Rachel both believed that the mandrake

Like Jacob, we must have faith that God is with us and will help us with our lives in good times and bad.

plant held special powers of fertility (vv. 14-15), and Leah even imagines they will help her bear children to Jacob (v. 16). Later, Laban confesses his belief in witchcraft when he says, “I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you [Jacob].” (v. 27 ESV). Finally, as Jacob prepares to leave Laban for

Canaan, Rachel steals the household idols of her father, which were believed to hold special powers, and presumably would benefit their travels (Gen 31:19 ESV). However, in stark contrast, Jacob instead attributes the powers working in his life to be from God. He states, “The God of my father has been with me” (v. 5), “God has not allowed him [Laban] to harm me” (v. 7), “God has taken away your father’s livestock and

has given them to me” (v. 9), “God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands.” (v42). Jacob never attributes any of his children, prosperity, or difficulties to the powers of divination, images, witches, or mysticism which influenced Laban and his daughters. He always attributes them to the true God of Israel, as it should also be with us as fellow believers.

Summary

If we really believe the records of Israel, Saul, Jacob, and Paul mentioned above, then we will not be able to accept that witches or witchcraft will have any effect upon us or others. Like Jacob, we must have faith that God is with us and will help us with our lives in good times and bad. The examples considered show that witches do not have power over God's people—which we know we are, by reason of our calling and baptism.

In summary God's Word teaches us that:

1. God's people must seek counsel from God through prayers and believing.
2. Believers need to retain their faith in God, even in the most adverse of circumstances and not only despise witchcraft, but also root it out.
3. God deems witchcraft as a human fabrication, employed to cheat others. Witchcraft is powerless.
4. Those who believe or practice witchcraft must be rebuked through God's word, so that they may have hope of the coming Kingdom of God.
5. Brethren should not associate themselves with witchcraft of believe in other supernatural powers.

*Tychicus Mbuve,
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¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*. “Witchcraft.” Accessed April 26. britannica.com/topic/witchcraft/Witchcraft-in-Africa-and-the-world

² Bauer, Bruce L. *Cultural foundations for fear of witchcraft in Africa*. *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 13, no. 1 (2017):1-12. digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1353&context=jams

³ La Fontaine, Jean. *Witchcraft belief is a curse on Africa*. The Guardian. March 1, 2012. theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2012/mar/01/witchcraft-curse-africa-kristy-bamu

⁴ Associated Press. *African churches denounce children as witches* NBC News. October 17, 2009. nbcnews.com/id/wbna33356826

⁵ Dispatches for Channel 4 – All Documentary, *Return to Africa's Witch Children*, YouTube video, 48:32. June 10, 2018. youtube.com/watch?v=5Y06sKAg9Do (Note: this is the second of two documentaries produced by Dispatches for Channel 4. The first one is entitled *Saving Africa's Witch Children* and is also available on YouTube).

⁶ Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) et. al. *older people in Kenya must be protected from witchcraft accusations*. Help Age International. October 22, 2021. helpage.org/newsroom/latest-news/older-people-must-be-protected-from-witchcraft-accusations/

⁷ Reuters. Tanzania “witch killings” claimed 479 lives from January – June 2017: report. Africanews. August 1, 2017. africanews.com/2017/08/01/tanzania-witch-killings-claimed-479-lives-from-january-june-2017-report/

⁸ Suuk, Maxwell and Isaac Kaledzi. *Witch hunts: a global problem in the 21st century*. DW. October 8, 2020. dw.com/en/witch-hunts-a-global-problem-in-the-21st-century/a-54495289.

SERVICE THROUGH SONG

*An interview about the Worship Book project
with Sis. Rachel Hocking*

By Jessica Gelineau

IN the the following interview from April 6, 2022, Bro. Levi Myers and Bro. Levi Gelineau speak with Sis. Rachel Hocking of Brisbane, Australia about her role in the creation of the *Purple* and *Orange Worship Books*. These are compilations of Christadelphian-authored compositions which have greatly contributed to music in our community. Read on to hear Rachel and the Levis discuss music as service, the process behind the formation of the *Worship Books*, and even plans for future volumes (colors yet to be decided!). You can find this interview in its entirety in Episode #4 of the *Good Christadelphian Music* podcast.

Levi G: Rachel, what's your musical background?

Rachel: "I play piano" would be the simple answer! I started lessons when I was four, and like a lot of kids, eventually went to university and studied piano. Now I work at university and teach piano and do lots of music projects and some research, but it's all in the field of music.

Levi G: We're having this interview because you're working on pulling together the third volume of the *Worship Book*, which I'm very excited about. I'm a big fan of the first two *Worship Books*. Let's go back to the first *Worship Book*. What inspired you to make a new songbook of sorts? Or what do you call it?

Rachel: I call it the *Worship Book*. We have the *Purple Worship Book* and the *Orange Worship Book*. What happened was, we were organizing music for the Australian National Christadelphian Conference in 2008. Sis. Nita Lawrie said, "It'd be great to have a whole week


of music where it's just Christadelphian music. Surely, we've got enough." I said, "I'll take on the project." So that became my job for the conference. I wanted to turn it into something that had quality, that people enjoyed holding in their hand and playing from, and to make sure it had a massive variety of music that came from the Christadelphian community. What I ended up being given was twelve barely written out songs! So, we gleaned a lot of songs that had already been published into these little handwritten paperback books, as well as grabbing some new music. We also gave a project for Christadelphian composers to write something to the theme "I will wait for you," which is in the *Purple Worship Book* [#8]. That's a song we absolutely love. I know Sydney absolutely loved it, which was actually written for that particular conference. So, we had the *Purple Worship Book* done leading up to the conference and we launched it beforehand. Then we did a similar thing with the *Orange Worship Book* in 2016, eight years later. Now I'm thinking, another eight years later we should be thinking about doing another one in 2024! We've now got a whole different generation of composers, and some of them have seen the *Worship Books*, and the way they're used, and they really want to share their music through something like that. They're the ones who have been asking, "Are you going to do another one?" Although some ecclesias might feel like it's a bit of new music overload, we're trying to encourage them to use their talents in service, and we need something like this to be able to put their original works in and share and continue to try and raise the bar of music in Christadelphia.

Levi M: I think it's really cool to see how much new Christadelphian music is coming out now. I'm curious what your process is for this new book on choosing songs. How do you choose which ones are usable from so many? For the first couple of books, maybe it was hard to find enough songs, but certainly not now.

Rachel: I should say we've always had people who help us out massively with these projects. So, I usually have about 20 people helping me out with the project, everything from notators to people who check the lyrics and all sorts of things. I really liked the process behind the *Orange Worship Book*, which is what I'm using now for this new book. The process requires a set date. You must get your composition in by that date, through our website. With the *Orange Worship Book*, after that date, it was an entire week of listening because there were 360 songs that were submitted.

Levi G: What was the total you selected?

Rachel: It was 130 songs, and that's to do with the layout of the book and the way the songs are. We condensed the songs a little bit to get them into the book as well. I think we spent five minutes on each song, and it took days and days. It was serious sitting down listening and asking, "Does it work? Yes, or no?" And we're thinking of things like, "Where could it be used?" "What's the range of the song?" "How difficult would it be to learn?" "If it is difficult to learn, is it worth it?" Also, "What are the lyrics doing?" "Do we like the lyrics, or if we ask for a change in the lyrics, will that person be open to it?" Things like that. We're also trying to make sure that we've got a broad range of subjects within the book. That all comes down to usability for the book as well. I know there're gaps in the book where we need more types of songs written, like it'd be great to have some more Christadelphian-only songs for the bread and wine. For that moment in the service, we just don't have enough. More songs are needed



"I find sometimes as we, as Christadelphians, have a certain style, but it'd be nice to open the doors and have a much bigger range in style."

that are focused on discipleship, in a positive way.

Levi G: I hadn't thought about a variance of themes before, until you brought that up. That would be a challenge.

Rachel: I find sometimes we, as Christadelphians, have a certain style, but it'd be nice to open the doors and have a much bigger range in style. So, that's why I wanted to try something like the *Worship Book* project to just see what people would think.

Levi G: Amen to that. Our goal is to encourage the production and use of Christadelphian music. I feel like the more people hear it, and get examples of it, they will be inspired and say, "Okay, I can do that too." I loved the video from the *Worship Book* YouTube page for the song, "Let the Rain Fall." We covered that song in one of our earlier episodes, because that really struck a chord with me in early lockdown. I listened to it like 500 times.

Levi M: I think it's so cool to have the access to equipment that we do nowadays, and have the ability to record with a computer and a microphone. It really opens that opportunity for such a wide range of new music, both from a style perspective and also from different parts of the world. Being able to work with Christadelphians who you haven't even met and having access to all this recording equipment, we can do some really good collaborating, and I think the more that can happen, the more content we're going to have. A lot of really good praise, obviously praise to God, is the key.

Rachel: I really do think this is a community thing. It is completely anchored in praise for God in an outward way, but it is a way of bringing a community together as well. One of my dream projects is that I would love is to have a book that has original music from the Christadelphian community that's representative of the different countries that we have ecclesias in. Having it in the original language would be really good. I would love a book that has some artwork and some poetry, and that's a project that celebrates the community. This is one that I'm really keen to do. I sent out some emails about it, got some replies and then ended up getting busy with some other things, but that's the dream.

Levi G: I like that idea! Do you have any hopes or goals for the third *Worship Book*, being different from the first two?

Rachel: I'm hoping we'd reach even more countries from where people would submit songs. I'd really like for it to be even more representative. Like I said, I'd love people to look at the subjects where we need more songs and write according to those subjects. I think some more introspective lyrics would be really good as well. That, and also reaching composers that we haven't gotten to yet.

One of my dream projects, is that I would love is to have a book that has original music from the Christadelphian community that's representative of the different countries that we have ecclesias in.

Levi G: You mentioned the website and the online submission. If you go to your website, theworshipbook.com, you have the rules for submission, which is great. You've done a good job of guiding people. Definitely one of my goals for this interview is to get some people to submit some music for you and to hopefully get it in the book. I think what I'm seeing here on the website would be very helpful to read if you are a songwriter who's considering submission.

Rachel: It's got what we're looking for on this particular project. You might be trained in music, or you might not be, but still be inspired to write something. So, it's just some help there because we don't look at people's training or anything like that, we're looking at the song itself.

Levi M: Do you ever get a song that you think is great, but then the recording that you're sent is just very basic chords and you feel like you need to add something?

Rachel: We've done some of those. That's not too hard. The tricky ones for us are putting a guitar piece onto a piano, where the strumming is a certain way. It's not always going to work, so the guitar songs still very much sound like guitar songs. But what we found from the *Purple Worship Book* was the people who tended to teach new music in the ecclesia were also the piano players. So, for the *Orange Worship Book* we then moved everything to making sure they had a piano accompaniment, because there's a lot of piano players, and they're unconfident with lead sheets. I should say we do keep some things tricky on purpose, as well, because we're trying to educate at the same time. You know

what it's like as a musician, when you're dying to play something and it's just at that level ahead of where you actually are, but because you're dying to play it, you'll work at it and improve your skills. So, that is something that we do.

Levi G: Something I enjoyed the one time I've been to Australia is the idea of the meditational or devotional hymn, and including a performance or a small group performance in your Memorial Service, instead of it always needing to be congregational, which is pretty universal in the US and Canada. I really do think that's an easy shift an ecclesia could take, especially if they have musical talent. If you have a beautiful soloist in your ecclesia, it makes sense to use them.

Rachel: Absolutely. In Australia, some of our states have an amazing instrumental system where kids learn orchestral instruments at school. You want to be able to have a place for them to use that capability, that skill, in the ecclesia. We want to point them in the direction of using their music for service to God, and to help the community with praise. So, yeah, I'm all for bands, ensembles, all that sort of thing. The piano is the easy way out, and I'm a classical piano player. It is the easy way out because it's one person. The more difficult way is to try and get an ensemble together and rehearse and have something to present. But collaboration is really special because it involves a lot more people.

Levi M: I want to know what color the next one's going to be!

Rachel: Ah, I don't know! We're thinking maybe an aqua blue or maybe sunshine yellow, something like that, something happy. Or like a pink, like

a cerise, would look really cool as well. We use that Buckram stuff, which is used on university theses, so it's a standard selection of colors that you can look up on any printer. I'm thinking we might turn that into a little bit of a lead up to the book, campaigning, what color should it be?

Levi G: My last question is, how has working on the *Worship Books* affected your faith personally?

Rachel: Ah, that's a really interesting question because I'm not sure if I see music affecting my faith. I use my faith to do the music thing, but I don't think my faith grows because I'm doing the music. I see faith and growth coming from other things in life, like health challenges like we've had in our family. I don't know... for me, this is service. This is a service thing. It's an expression of my faith, I guess, is what I would say. Doing the *Worship Book* is an expression of my faith. Also, music for me is spiritual. It goes beyond anything on a written page. For me, God breathes His spirit into each person, and you can breathe out in service to God through song. You know, we're using spirit breath every time we sing. It's a sacred thing that's happening there.

Levi G: Beautiful. Well, thank you so much for your time, Rachel, this has been a real treat to have this catch up with you. Again, I really hope this interview and this information inspires people to submit songs for the new book. The submission deadline is **November 30th, 2022.**

Rachel: Yes, please let everyone know! And thank you for having me, I appreciate it.

Sis. Rachel Hocking can be contacted at rachel@theworshipbook.com. We thank her again for taking the time to share her thoughts and experiences. If you have written an original spiritual song that you would like to see included in the newest *Worship Book*, please visit theworshipbook.com/submit-your-song to review guidelines and complete your submission!

For anyone wanting to learn more about how to utilize the existing *Worship Books*, I recommend checking out the helpful May 2021 *Tidings* article by Sis. Kristin Atwood.

*Jessica Gelineau,
(Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA)*

POLITICS & SKEPTICISM

A Biblical
Perspective on
Trust

By Bill Link

Conspiracy Thinking and Radical Skepticism

THERE is a strong mistrust in society today, a spirit of suspicion and skepticism that is almost pathological. The COVID-19 experience has bred a lot of it, with debates about vaccination, wearing masks, etc. Conspiracy thinking is very much on the rise. Subject matter experts are dismissed as “so-called experts.” Scientists are called “so-called scientists.”

This article is not about the particulars of these debates. I don’t want to argue for or against mask mandates or vaccinations. I don’t want to take sides on whether climate change is happening or not, and if it is, whether mankind is responsible for it. Instead, I want to focus on godly thinking. The Lord Jesus said that the first and great commandment is, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”* (Mark 12:30).¹ This is a call to good thinking. In this article I want to address a couple of concerns about influences on our thinking.

The first of these is the strong pull of politics. There are clear political overtones to many contemporary controversies. Abstinence from politics is fundamental to our identity as Christadelphians and is based on sound Scriptural teaching. We face strong challenges to maintain this aspect of our identity and need to ask whether our thinking is influenced by the politics of the day.

A second influence to be avoided arises from a misapplication of Biblical teaching about human nature, and the

evils of the world. Radical skepticism and conspiracy thinking might appeal to us because we know that the world is evil.

In this article, we will consider Psalm 146, John 17 and Jeremiah 17, seeking a Biblical perspective on trust and our attitude toward the world.

Psalm 146: Our Political Inclinations and Why They’re to be Avoided

Let’s be honest with ourselves. As much as we claim to stay out of politics, it is evident that many of us are inclined to sympathize with the views of one political party and to despise the views of another. Such sympathies can arise because of our understanding of God’s will. If one party is more supportive of Israel, we may favor that one. If one party endorses behavior the Bible condemns, we may be inclined to favor another. If one party’s policies are more consistent with Biblical standards of caring for the poor and needy, and immigrants, we may favor that one.

The problem is, we’ll never find a political party with goals completely consistent with the will of God. Religious folks that take part in politics are forced to prioritize their convictions, and to choose the “least worst” of the options. What a blessing it is that we don’t need to do so. In fact, we are called on not to be involved—it is a part of our Christadelphian heritage, one not to be forsaken, that we regard ourselves as *“strangers and sojourners.”* (Heb 11:13 and 1 Pet 2:11).

We Really Need to Stay Out of Politics

One of our most familiar “proof passages” is in Psalm 146. It’s a passage we use to teach that the sleep of death is unconscious, in contrast to the false teaching that man has an immortal soul.

*While I live will I praise the LORD:
I will sing praises unto my God
while I have any being. Put not
your trust in princes, nor in the son
of man, in whom there is no help.
His breath goeth forth, he returneth
to his earth; in that very day his
thoughts perish. Happy is he that
hath the God of Jacob for his help,
whose hope is in the LORD his God.
(Psa 146:2-5).*

We are correct in using this passage to teach the mortality of man,² but its primary message is that we should put our trust in God rather than humanity. Consequently, we stay out of politics!

Those who rest their hopes in human leaders are inevitably disappointed. It may be that the leader doesn't have the wherewithal to accomplish his or her intents. It may be that the political leader is subsequently disgraced by revelations of personal misconduct. It may be that the leader's good intentions cannot be realized, simply because of the leader's mortality or other obstacles.

But our God is unlimited in His power, and will bring about all for which we could hope, all that the politicians cannot deliver for a variety of reasons.

*Who made heaven and earth, The
sea, and all that is in them; Who
keeps truth forever, Who executes
justice for the oppressed, Who gives
food to the hungry. The LORD
gives freedom to the prisoners.
The LORD opens the eyes of the
blind; The LORD raises those who
are bowed down; The LORD loves
the righteous. The LORD watches
over the strangers; He relieves the
fatherless and widow; But the
way of the wicked He turns upside
down. (Psa 146:6-9).*

Our hope and reliance is in the God of Jacob. Like Abraham, we are “*strangers and sojourners*” and need to be careful not to be encumbered by the thinking of the present age. It would be a shame if our community were divided along political lines, but thanks be to God, we're united by a common hope, generated by trust in God rather than trust in flesh. It's a hope that “*does not disappoint.*” (Rom 5:5 NKJV).

Psalm 146 is one of many passages teaching us to trust God rather than man.

Trust vs Skepticism

Some believers are attracted to conspiracy thinking and distrust of experts precisely because we are told not to put our trust in man, and because the world is evil. I believe such reasoning is unsound.

Of course, a certain amount of trust is essential to society. When you get on an airplane, you trust the pilot knows



what he's doing, that the air traffic controllers have good equipment and good judgment. When I take my car to Lenny the mechanic, I trust he'll fix the brakes or whatever, and that the car will be safe, and the work done at a fair price. I've had good experiences with him, and know others who have as well. I have no reason to mistrust him.

We understand what the Bible says about human nature. We know what the world is like. John, in his first epistle, says *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15). And yet, a bitter, suspicious, skeptical outlook is surely not healthy. This same world that we're not to love is the world which God so loved, to which He gave His only begotten son.

Consider what Jesus says about us, and our interaction with the world, in John 17:14-21.³

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are

in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:14-21).

We might think from John 17:14 that the world is hopelessly at odds with God, but verses 18 and 21 say that we have been sent into the world *"that the world may believe."*

We cannot be effective servants of God if we are pathologically mistrusting. We undermine our effectiveness as teachers of the Truth if we put ourselves up as authorities about things beyond our expertise. Our expertise is (or ought to be) in the Scriptures. We undermine our credibility when we go beyond this, to pontificate or extrapolate about things we don't understand. Brethren who use the platform to assert that all scientists are stupid or dishonest set up our young people for spiritual failure. Such young people will meet scientists who are good thinkers and honest, and find a conflict—a most unnecessary conflict—between science and faith.

I know a believer whose radical skepticism about the world has influenced him to believe that the earth is flat. Think of the vastness of the conspiracy required to support that idea, in this day and age! The entirety of NASA, the entire scientific world has got to be in on it! Could such a conspiracy work? The moon landing, the Mars explorations—all a vast collaboration of lies, and to what end? What of the satellites that inform our GPS?

To hold such views isn't to forsake God,⁴ but it surely undermines our witness, especially if we in any

way associate those views with the fundamentals of our faith. We would be seen as crackpots, and do disservice to the faith. What's more, the distrust which we label as virtuous, is actually a manifestation of a different kind of trust—trust of a minority that is no more trustworthy (and likely less trustworthy) than the experts we would question.

We need to take a closer look at what the Bible means when it contrasts trust of God with trust of man.

Jeremiah 17: Trust and the Heart of Man

Jeremiah 17:9 is a familiar proof passage about another aspect of man's nature, his moral nature. Verse 9 tells us that *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* It is a clear statement of what Paul says in Romans 14, that sin is at work in us like a law of nature; that we're not "basically good."

Consider the verses leading up to this:

Thus says the LORD: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.' (Jer 17:5-8).

What a word picture! The man who trusts in man is like a desert shrub that ekes out a difficult existence in hopeless circumstances. The man who trusts in God is like a tree planted by a stream, always watered, even in difficult times. It never ceases to bear fruit.

Jeremiah clearly spells out what's wrong with trusting in man. The man who trusts in man *"makes flesh his strength"* and his heart departs from the LORD. There are two steps involved. The first is confidence in "flesh"—confidence in self, and in others. The second is having a heart which departs from the LORD.

The first of these is the spirit condemned in the epistle of James.

Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit' yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.' (Jas 4:13-16).

Having taken the first step of reliance on the flesh, the second step is that the *"heart departs from the LORD."* And that's the problem. That's the heart that is *"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* In the first verse of the chapter, Jeremiah said that the *"sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart."*

The trust in man that is cursed is that which makes flesh its strength, disregarding God. It's not about trusting Lenny the mechanic. The trust

that is condemned is that which forms the central tenet of humanism, rejecting God and exalting man.

We often skip Jeremiah's rhetorical question about the deceitful heart in verse 9, "*Who can know it?*" Verse 10 gives the answer, "*I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*" It is crucial that our Trust (capital T!) be in the LORD. As the LORD said to Samuel, "*The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*" (1 Sam 16:7).

Conclusion

We miss the point if we think that Biblical instruction about not putting trust in man means being radically skeptical. It is appropriate and reasonable for us to trust others, so long as that trust does not lead us away from God. Mistrust is not a virtue, especially when it is in reality an expression of trust in political and conspiracy-minded individuals.

The trust in man that we are to avoid is the trust that shoulders or pushes God out of His world, which assumes we and

other men have the solution to all of our problems. Jeremiah 17 teaches that such trust turns our hearts from God.

We live in a world that is awash with media voices, many having a strong political agenda. It is natural for us to pay attention to the ones we are most comfortable with—if you're a FOX News kind of person, you listen to FOX News. If you're an MSNBC type, you tune in to MSNBC. Media analysts speak of "echo chambers," where one's own perspective is constantly reinforced, without fair presentation of alternative views. Despite our first allegiance to Christ, it is possible for us to be influenced by these. Political views are making inroads into the community.

Psalm 146 expresses the vanity of putting trust in man to solve the world's problems. Our hope is in God. Let's recommit to being "*strangers and sojourners,*" having here "*no lasting city.*" Let's be on guard to avoid the influence of politics.

Bill Link
(Baltimore Ecclesia, MD)

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural citations are taken from the New King James Version.

² Some modern versions (e.g., RSV, ESV) translate vs 4 as "*his plans perish.*" This translation gives the correct sense of the passage, but masks the literal sense, appropriately rendered by the KJV and RV. Robert Alter's translation and commentary says: "The Hebrew appears only here, but it is related to a verbal stem in Jonah that means 'to think' or 'to reflect.'" Note also that verse 2 says "*While I live... while I have any being,*" the clear sense being that a time will come when the Psalmist ceases to be.

³ More than half of the New Testament references to "*the world*" (Greek, *cosmos*) are in John's gospel and epistles, and about a quarter of these are in John 17.

⁴ Brother Robert Roberts's masterful article on "*True Principles and Uncertain Details*" is required reading for any Christadelphian worth his or her salt. The climax and goal of the article is that uncertain details about who will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ should not divide us. It is interesting to note that along the way, he argues that belief in the Kingdom on earth is a true and essential principle, but that the geometry of the earth is an "uncertain detail"—not a matter of fellowship!



WHO WAS THE PHARAOH OF EXODUS?

By Gerald Eising

If you rely on Hollywood to teach you history you would be led to believe that there was only one Pharaoh of the Exodus, namely Rameses. But while the film “The Ten Commandments” may have been good entertainment, it was, nevertheless, very poor history.¹ What follows is a look at what actually did happen.

It was during the Old Kingdom (around 2686 BC) that the land of Egypt was unified under a central monarchy and became a wealthy and

powerful Kingdom. However, the Nile River began a series of insufficient flooding seasons, which led to widespread hunger and death. As a result, the government fell into chaos, and the country splintered into a dozen chiefdoms. The kings of the 11th Dynasty restored power back to the monarchy, although the local governors maintained significant power as well. The 11th and 12th Dynasties were the main ruling Dynasties in the Middle Kingdom (it was probably at this time

Joseph came into Egypt, 1876 BC). The 13th Dynasty was marked by a significant decline in military power and in large scale building projects. Due to the decline, the state system collapsed, and Egypt entered a dark period of chaos and disruption once again.

As a result of Egypt's decline, a Semitic people called the Hyksos,² originating from the northern part of Mesopotamia, invaded lower Egypt and established themselves as the 14th ruling dynasty. Egyptian records tell of an invasion of peoples through the Eastern Delta in northern Egypt bordering the Mediterranean Sea. These Semitic immigrants had been steadily entering the country for some time and gradually gaining increasing authority in the region. The Hyksos finally sacked the city of Memphis, Egypt around 1720 BC controlling the northern half of Egypt. Meanwhile the Nubians south of Egypt were growing in power. Lastly, the Southern "Native Egyptian" rulers were establishing the 17th dynasty in Thebes in the South. These Theban kings managed, more or less, to continue with the culture that had prevailed during the Middle Kingdom period. The last two rulers of this native Egyptian dynasty in Thebes, Seqenenre and his son Kamose started rebelling against the Hyksos.

Ahmose I, brother of Kamose, led a successful revolt against the Hyksos and drove them completely out of Egypt. Thus, Ahmose (1521 BC) was the first ruler of the 18th dynasty and established the New Kingdom as a military power. With the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Theban prince Ahmose

reigned supreme. The Egyptian army pushed beyond the traditional frontiers of Egypt into Syria-Palestine and brought Nubia under control. The Theban conquerors had thus established the 18th dynasty, creating a great empire under a long succession of rulers. The New Kingdom that Ahmose had inaugurated was the greatest imperial might in Egypt's long history.

This brings us to the question: What was the actual date of the Exodus? The general opinion of historians is either 1225 BC or 1446-1445 BC. Note the reference to the Hebrews building the city of Ramses in Exodus 1:11 *"So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Ramses"*³ has led many scholars to believe that Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. However, if Ramses were the Pharaoh that is mentioned in Exodus 1:11 then he would have had to been reigning over Egypt for over eighty years. However, neither Ramses, nor any other Pharaoh in history reigned for that long. We know this because in verse 11 Moses was not yet born, and Moses did not return to Egypt as deliverer until he was eighty years old. Exodus 7:7: *"Moses was 80 years old and Aaron 83, when they made their demands to Pharaoh."*

In Exodus 2:23, it records a period a long time after the king of Egypt died. There the Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from bondage rose up to God. In Exodus 4:18, Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro, and said to him, *"Let me go back to my kinsmen in Egypt and see how they are*

faring.” Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

Exodus 2:23 states that the Pharaoh that had oppressed Israel is dead, and there is a new Pharaoh when Moses returns to Egypt. This means the Pharaoh of Exodus 1:11 and the Pharaoh of the Exodus could not possibly be the same person! Those who take this view of 1225 BC are not really taking the text seriously. There are possible reasons for the name Ramses being attributed to the city that the Israelite slaves built. First, Ramses II finished the building of the city during his reign and named it after himself, which he was known for doing. The city of Ramses is the “only” evidence given for the date (i.e., 1225 BC), for the Exodus. This date, is in fact, proven quite unlikely by other Egyptian records.

Some additional historical insight is provided from archeology,⁴ which shows that Merenptah (1213-1203 BC), the Pharaoh immediately after Ramses II, wrote in his own words that Israel was already in the land of Canaan during his reign. On a stone stele that scholars have named after Pharaoh Merneptah, he detailed his conquests of the lands of Libya and parts of Canaan. On it, he brags about defeating the Israelites in a battle. It is nearly impossible that the Israelites would have left Egypt as slaves in 1225 BC, wandered around in the wilderness for forty years and then entered Canaan to become a people established in the land with a fairly stable government and military less than approximately twenty years later.

Now let's consider the argument for the earlier 1446-1445 BC view of the Exodus. 1 Kings 6:1 says: “*And it came*

to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Zif, which is in the second month that he began to build the temple of Yahweh.” Note that the times for both the Exodus and the beginning of the construction of the Temple have been specifically stated here. Biblical scholars have identified the fourth year of Solomon's reign as 966 BC (give or take a year) Using this date one finds that the Exodus must have taken place around 1446-1445 BC.

Furthermore, according to Judges 11:26, Israel had occupied Canaan for three hundred years before the Judgeship of Jephthah, which is dated between 1100-1050 BC. This dates Joshua's conquest between 1400-1350 BC. Adding Israel's forty years in the wilderness puts the Exodus between 1440-1390 BC.

Finally, Exodus 2:23 and Acts 7:13 both state that Moses lived in Midian forty years while the Pharaoh of the oppression was still alive. The only Pharaohs that ruled forty years, or more, were Thutmose III and Ramses II and we have already shown above that Ramses's reign makes it unlikely he was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

In addition to the Biblical references cited, there are also archeological finds that also suggest the 1446-1445 BC dates. John Garstang, who excavated Jericho in the 1930s, dated the destruction of Jericho around 1400 BC. Jericho was the first city the Israelites conquered under Joshua when they entered the land of Canaan. Adding forty years to Garstang's date (to account for the forty years

in the wilderness) puts the exodus shortly before 1440 BC. Garstang also concluded that the walls of the city toppled outward, which is consistent with the Biblical account.

The Amarna Tablets (circa 1440 BC) are a collection of over three hundred diplomatic letters that record correspondence between the Pharaoh of Egypt and Egyptian representatives in the land of Canaan. These letters speak of a period of chaos caused by the “Habiru;” very likely this refers to the Hebrews. This matches up with Joshua leading the Israelites in the conquest of the land in the late 1440’s BC. One can see that there is ample evidence in archeology and history to prove that the exodus happened in 1446-1445 BC, just as the Bible records.⁵

Now we should be able to answer the questions:

1. Who was the Pharaoh who practiced genocide on the Hebrew male babies?
2. Who was the daughter of Pharaoh who found and adopted Moses?
3. Who was the Pharaoh who tried to kill Moses and forced him to flee to Midian?
4. Who was the Pharaoh of the plagues and the Exodus?

Scholars who take the numbers and dates in the Bible at face value place the time of Jacob’s going down to Egypt in about 1876 BC. Joseph’s experience would thus fall in the time prior to when the foreign Hyksos controlled Egypt. Accordingly, everything in the narrative points to a native Egyptian setting, not a Hyksos one. Joseph’s death would have been around 1806

BC, just a few years prior to the end of the 12th Dynasty, which marks the decline of the Middle Kingdom.

Exodus 1:8 tells us that “A *new King* arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph.” It is difficult to identify the “*new King*” since the text is vague about how much time passed in Exodus 1. However, the rise of a “*new King*” makes sense if it is understood as a new dynasty.

Acts 7:18 provides more information: “*Until there arose over Egypt another King who did not know Joseph.*” When Stephen quotes this passage, he uses the Greek word for a different King, which means something that was not like the previous. This statement “*who did not know Joseph*” means that this Pharaoh had “no knowledge” of Egyptian history, for it is unlikely that Joseph’s act of saving Egypt and the surrounding nations from starvation would have gone unrecorded and untaught. This suggests that something of great significance in history has caused Joseph’s acts to be erased and forgotten, or that the current Pharaoh did not come from a native Egyptian lineage. Therefore, this new “*new King*” was most likely a Hyksos ruler. The Hyksos were a blend of Semitic people from the Northern part of Mesopotamia. As foreigners they would have had no knowledge of Joseph. In about 1570 BC the native Egyptian Ahmose led a full rebellion against the Hyksos and drove them out of Egypt and became Pharaoh after 150 years of Hyksos rule. It is likely that Ahmose would also not have known about Joseph either and thus would have just kept the Hebrews enslaved.

After Ahmose's death, his son Amenhotep I became Pharaoh. He had military campaigns into Kush, Nubia, and possibly Libya. He was followed by his son Thutmose I (1524-1518) who just may be the start to our solving who was the reigning Pharaoh of the exodus. According to Exodus 1:22, *"Then Pharaoh charged all his people [the Hebrews] saying every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."* Probably the main reason for this command is found in verse 12, *"But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that they came to dread the Israelites."* It was during his reign that Pharaoh's daughter happened to go down to the Nile River to bathe.

Continuing with Exodus 2:5-10, the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said: *"This must be a Hebrew child."* Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, *"Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?"* Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." Hence, the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, *"Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay you your wages. So, the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter who made him her own son. She called his name Moses, explaining, 'I drew him out of the water.'"*

Pharaoh Thutmose II succeeded his Father Thutmose I on the throne of Egypt (1492 BC) and married his

half-sister Hatshepsut (she was most likely the one who adopted Moses). Thutmose II died young, and the throne went to his infant son, born to a secondary wife. According to custom, Hatshepsut began acting as Thutmose III's regent, until her stepson became of age. After less than seven years, however, Hatshepsut took the unprecedented step of assuming the full powers of a Pharaoh herself, becoming co-ruler of Egypt with Thutmose III. Knowing her power grab was highly controversial, Hatshepsut fought to defend its legitimacy, pointing to her royal lineage and claiming that her father had appointed her to be his successor. She sought to reinvent her image, and in statues and paintings of that time suggest that she was portrayed as a male Pharaoh, with a beard and large muscles. In other images, she appeared in traditional female regalia. Hatshepsut surrounded herself with supporters in key positions in government. Her power and influence would explain why Moses had a reasonable amount of security among those ruling Egypt. She may even have had ideas about placing him on the throne! Hatshepsut died around 1458 BC, finally, paving the way for Thutmose III to assume full power.

Pharaoh Thutmose III Forced Moses to Flee to Midian

As the sole ruling Pharaoh of the Kingdom, he created the largest empire Egypt had ever seen. No fewer than seventeen military campaigns were conducted, and he conquered lands from the Niya Kingdom in Northern Syria to the fourth cataract of the Nile in Nubia. He also went on a massive building project in Egypt.

Thutmose made it a mission in his life to erase all evidence of Hatshepsut's rule in Egypt. He removed all her images from temples, monuments and inscriptions that she had made. Historians of ancient Egypt knew little of Hatshepsut until 1822, when they were able to decode and read the hieroglyphics on the walls of Deir-El-Bahri on the banks of the Nile River near Luxor, Egypt.⁶

We can well imagine what was going through Moses' mind at this time. Especially seeing he was becoming more and more conscious of his

Hebrew origins. Exodus 2:13-15 states that the matter came to a stunning conclusion—when he went out the next day behold, two Hebrew slaves were struggling together. He said to the man in the wrong, “*Why do you strike your companion?*” He answered, “*Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?*” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “*Surely the thing is known.*” When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. Given Moses' age at the time that he fled, it is fairly certain this coincided with the reign of Pharaoh Thutmose III. But this Pharaoh could not have been the ruler at the time of the Exodus!

Pharaoh of the Exodus—Amenhotep II Pharaoh vs Yahweh

Finally, after forty years in the remote regions of Midian, Moses receives his commission from the LORD God to liberate the Hebrews. By that time Pharaoh Thutmose III had died and his son Amenhotep II assumed the throne. When Amenhotep II became Pharaoh, he inherited a large Kingdom



Ipuwer Papyrus

from his father. He also began many campaigns to enlarge it, under him more monuments and buildings were built. It began to look as if he would outpace his father. Then it

all stopped! Historical records state that for several years after 1446-1445 BC, Amenhotep II was unable to carry out expensive military campaigns. That would seem very strange behavior by a Pharaoh who hoped to equal his father's legacy of no less than seventeen military campaigns in nineteen years. But isn't this what we would expect from a Pharaoh who had lost almost all his cavalry, chariots, and army at the Red Sea? Also, records state that it was only after nine years he mounted a small military campaign into Canaan, just to secure slaves and chariots. He also signed a peace treaty with the Mitanni State as a buffer against the growing Hittite nation.

Ipuwer Papyrus	Exodus
2:5-6 Plague is throughout the land blood is everywhere.	7:20 All the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.
2:10 The river is blood. Men shrink from tasting. And men thirst after water.	7:21 The river stank,... and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.
3:10-13 This is our water! This is our happiness! What shall we do in respect thereof? All is in ruin.	7:24 And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.
2:10--10:3-5 Forsooth gates, columns, and walls are consumed by fire Lower Egypt weeps. The entire palace is without its revenues. To it belong (By Right) wheat and barley, geese, and fish.	9:23-25 And the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So, there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous... and brake every tree of the field
6:3 Forsooth, the grain has perished on every side. 5:12 Forsooth, that has perished which was yesterday seen. The land is left over to its weariness like cutting of the flax.	9:31-32 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up. 10:15 And there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.
5:5--9:2-3 Cattle moan. Behold the cattle are left to stray and there is none to gather them together.	9:3 Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, ...there shall be a very grievous murrain. 9:19;21...gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; ... And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.
9:11 The land is left without light.	10:22 And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt.
4:4 (5:6) Forsooth the children of Princes dashed against the walls. 6:12 Forsooth the children of Princes are cast out in the streets. 6:3 The prison is ruined.	12:29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.
2:13 He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere. 3:14 It is groaning throughout the land mingled with lamentations.	12:30 There was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.
3:2 Gold and Lapis Lazuli, Silver and Malachite, Carnelian and Bronze...are fastened on the female slave.	12:35-36 They borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

Ipwer Papyrus

In the late 19th century, a papyrus was found in Egypt, it was taken to the Leiden Museum in Holland and interpreted by British Egyptologist Sir Alan Henderson Gardner (1879-1963) in 1909. The complete papyrus can be found in the book *Admonitions of an Egyptian from the Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden* (1183 BC). The papyrus describes violent upheavals in Egypt, starvation, drought, escape of slaves (with the wealth of Egypt) and death throughout the land. The papyrus was written by an Egyptian named Ipwer and appears to be the effects of the Exodus plagues from the perspective of an average Egyptian. On the previous page (310) is a Table comparing sections of this Papyrus with what is recorded in Exodus.

Dream Stele of Thutmose IV

The Dream Stele of Thutmose IV, Son of Amenhotep II states that he was not the legitimate successor to the throne. According to the "Dream Stele" the god of the Sphinx Har-Em-Akht, promised the throne to Thutmose IV on the condition he would restore the exposure of the Sphinx, which apparently had been covered by sand. This implies that Thutmose IV was not Amenhotep II's first born son. This is confirmed by other historical sources, and which

would support the final plague of Egypt i.e., the death of all the first born.

Amenhotep IV, great-grandson of Amenhotep II, took the name Akhenaten (Beloved of Aten). He built a new capital and declared that just a single deity should be worshiped. This deity was the Sun disk Aten, which was depicted with its rays extended like arms giving life, peace, and equality to all. It is not so unusual that a people who had been so powerfully impacted by the One True God of Moses would try to worship the God that had convincingly defeated their gods? It is rather interesting that Egypt today is indeed under one god, but the wrong one!

Does it really matter who the Pharaoh of the Exodus was? Probably not! Rahab, the woman who sheltered the two spies said it clearly. *"When we heard about it, we lost heart, and no man had any more spirit left because of you; for the Lord your God is the only God in Heaven above and on earth below!"* (Josh 2:11.) A lowly woman who had faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became greater than any Pharaoh who had ever lived. From her seed came the greatest ruler this world will ever know, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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¹ That wasn't the only historical inaccuracy in the film, but that is a subject for another time.

² The Hyksos were a people of foreign origin who conquered the Nile Delta and ruled over Egypt from around 1638 BC till 1530 BC.

³ All Scriptural citations are taken from *Tanakh: The New Jewish Publication Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, Jewish Publication Society, 1985

⁴ Merneptah Stele, also known as the Israel Stele, was discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie in 1896 at ancient Thebes. It is now housed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

⁵ For further study on the Amarna Tablets Google "The Amarna Letters and Tablets 1406-1340."

⁶ One of the most well-known structures which survive today is Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple. Also called "Deir-El-Bahri" located in the Valley of The Kings.



CHRISTIANITY'S GOLDEN CALF

By Richard Morgan

THE account of the golden calf in Exodus 32 wasn't an isolated incident in history. When Paul wrote about it in 1 Corinthians 10, he said, *"Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.'"* (v. 7).¹ Then Paul, using the Greek word *typos*, in the phrase, *"These things took place as examples for us"* (v. 6) gives a series of examples from the wilderness wanderings to apply to our lives. In so doing he points out to us that something like the golden calf incident is **typical** of human nature.

In this article, I want to illustrate that the typical story of the golden calf wasn't something that just happened in Biblical times. It also crops up at least twice in Christian history, having a direct bearing on the importance of first principle doctrines about God.

First, consider the main events that led up to the incident of the golden calf. The children of Israel were imprisoned as slaves in Egypt. God sent Moses to bring ten plagues on Egypt so the Israelites might be set free. The plagues directly confronted the Egyptian pantheon of false gods and signaled the complete collapse of their worldview. After finding freedom, Moses led the Israelites to Mount Sinai, where God gave them his Law. But when Moses came down the mountain with the stone tablets, he saw they had immediately apostatized in the worship of their newfound idol.

In the account of the plagues, we come across the magicians of Egypt. They were called magicians because of the Egyptian belief that everything in creation was ordered by something called *heka*, roughly translated as "magic."

Heka was the power that even the gods depended on, and the magicians invoked *heka* as priests of the Egyptian cultic arts. The Hebrew word for "magician," *chartom*, is a refraction of the Egyptian word *hry-hb*, and literally means "the carrier of the book of ritual." They were highly learned priests, masters of their literary traditions and rituals, Egypt's elite religious professionals.

After the Israelites left Egypt, God chose Aaron to be the High Priest of true religion. However, it was Aaron who was the one who made the golden calf. What happened?

Joshua 24:14 tells us that when they were enslaved, the Israelites served the gods of Egypt, and while God led them out of Egypt, it wasn't so easy to get Egypt out of them. Look at the context of Exodus 32, and see how everything takes us back to Egypt. In the previous section (chapter 31), the account of the pattern of the tabernacle is wrapped up with a description of those who would build it, like "*Bezalel the son of Uri*" (v. 2). We're told God "*filled him with the Spirit of God*" (v. 3) to do things like "*work in gold, silver, and bronze.*" (v. 4).

Now, look at the contrast in Exodus 32 when Aaron "*received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf.*" (v. 4). The juxtaposition is fascinating because there is no indication that Aaron was one of the men who was filled with the spirit of God. He worked with metal, but where did he obtain his skill? If it wasn't from God, the only place where he could have learned metallurgy was in Egypt, and it so happens that metalworking in Egypt was a highly advanced art:

“The methods of metalworking—melting, forging, soldering, and the chasing of metal—were not only much practiced, but also most highly developed. The frequent references of metalworking in Ancient Egypt give us a truer conception of the importance of this industry in Ancient Egypt.” (*Ancient Egyptian Culture Revealed, 2nd edition* by Moustafa Gadalla) [Greensboro, NC: Tehuti Research Foundation, 2007]

If we’re right that Aaron learned his craft in Egypt, then it adds weight to the idea that he was constructing what he was used to in Egypt—an idol of one of their gods. There are two main Egyptian gods associated with bovine creatures. One was *Hathor*, who they represented in the form of a cow. However, the word for “calf” in Hebrew, *egel*, is masculine, so it’s more likely that if Aaron was making an Egyptian idol, it was the god *Apis*. *Apis*, who was represented in Egypt by a bull, was not one of the main gods of Egypt but a lesser, intermediary god, a mediator between the Egyptian people and the god *Ptah*.

After the section about the builders of the tabernacle, there’s a seemingly random reminder of the Sabbath—

“Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest.” (v. 15). The reason for this reminder is that the building of the tabernacle was an object lesson to teach the children of Israel about God’s purpose in creation. The Sabbath itself recalled creation—*“It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”* (v. 17).

Interestingly, according to the Egyptians, the god *Ptah* was the fashioner of the Universe, and the *Apis* bull was his sacred animal. He was also the patron god of craftsmen and builders and is particularly associated with sculpture and metalworking. Not only that, but special tools were also used to perform ceremonies in his name, including the ritual adze, a graving tool. Remember what we learn about Aaron—*“he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf.”*

There’s one more contrast with Exodus 31. But before we look at it, remember what the magicians, the priests of Egypt, said when they met their match in the plagues—*“Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God.’”* (Exod 8:19). That phrase is only

Exodus 31	Exodus 32:4
v1-11 – spirit of God given to fashioners of tabernacle including metalwork	Aaron uses spirit of Egypt (skill in metalworking) to fashion golden calf
v12-17 – reminder of Sabbath when God fashioned the Universe	Golden calf represents <i>Apis</i> , intermediary between man and <i>Ptah</i> , fashioner of the Egyptian universe and patron god of metalworkers
v18 – finger of God used to inscribe tablets	Aaron uses Egyptian graving tool used for writing to fashion golden calf



Interior of the ancient Egyptian Temple of Horus at Edfu, Egypt.
Hieroglyphic carving showing the Pharaoh with the bull headed god Apis.

used in one other context in the Old Testament—Exodus 31.

The last part of Exodus 31, after we're told about the tabernacle builders and Sabbath law, is when Yahweh *"gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."* (v. 18). Here was God's law, stamped with divine approval by the finger of God.

Contrast that with Aaron using the graving tool to fashion the golden calf. The Hebrew word used for *"graving tool"* is *cheret*, translated *"pen"* in Isaiah 8:1 (see NKJV), meaning it was some sort of stylus. That word *cheret* also happens to be the only other word in the entire Old Testament that comes

from the same Hebrew root as the word for *"magicians," chartom*. Remember the literal meaning of the word—*"the carrier of the book of ritual."* The magicians were lector-priests, meaning they were the ones who would read out the spells and incantations of the Egyptian cult. But they would also have to have written down those spells, and for that, they would need a stylus. Perhaps Aaron was using such a stylus for his graving tool.

In Aaron's mind, however, he wasn't replacing the worship of Yahweh. After fashioning the golden calf in the next verse, he said, *"Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."* It's an example of religious **syncretism**, the mixing of truth and error.

The psalmist's commentary on this incident is insightful. He writes, *"They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass."* (Psa 106:19-20). Notice the psalmist doesn't say they exchanged God but the "glory of God."

To understand the implications of that statement in Psalm 106, we need to look more closely at what was being exchanged in Exodus 32. We've already seen that they weren't replacing Yahweh. However, the impetus for their decision to make a tangible god is Moses disappearing up the mountain.

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him," Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for to his Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (v. 1).

While the golden calf was not a replacement for Yahweh, it **was a replacement** for Moses. Remember, *Apis* was an intermediary god, just as Moses was between God and the people. The people needed another go-between with him gone, and they chose **Apis**.

Do we see anything like this in history? Our mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul warned,

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. (2 Cor 11:3-4).

In effect, this is what is happening in Exodus 32. Egypt had deceived Aaron and the people, and they went back there in their hearts. They lost their devotion to their leader Moses and replaced him with "another Jesus" in the form of *Apis*, the golden calf. Not only that, but they also received a "different spirit." Instead of the spirit of God that enabled Bezalel to build the tabernacle, Aaron invoked the spirit of Egypt to work metal and make the golden calf. It was a "different gospel" in the sense that the finger of God used to inscribe the tablets was replaced by an Egyptian stylus used for writing Egyptian gospel. What happened in Exodus 32 was **typical** of human nature. Think about things from the point of view of

Paul's Warning to the Corinthians	Golden Calf	Christian History
Different Jesus	Replacement for Moses the mediator	Son of God becomes God the Son
Different Spirit	Egyptian metalworking techniques	Classical philosophy mixed in
Different Gospel	Etched by Egyptian graving tool	Creeds of Trinitarian Christianity

Christian history. After Jesus and the apostles preached the gospel, many men and women were converted from the legalism of the Jewish religion and, later, the paganism of the Roman world. Just like the Israelites, they were freed from spiritual slavery.

However, many ante-and post-Nicene theologians (before and after AD 325) had been elites in their pagan religions before their conversion. And many of them brought the learning of classical philosophy with them into their approach to Scripture. Clement of Alexandria, Egypt (c. 15-215), an ante-Nicene theologian, for example, wrote this:

“We are not far off the mark if we repeat the common thought that indeed philosophy has been given to the Greeks as their own kind of covenant, their foundation for

philosophy of Christ.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6.8 (PG. 9. 288), Migne, Patrologia, vol. 9, col. 288).

The post-Nicene theologians were no different. One of the most lauded of all, Augustine of Hippo in North Africa (354-430), wrote:

“There are in the writings of the Platonists, ways that show the path that leads to belief in God and His Word.” (Augustine, *Confessions* 8, 5).

Like Aaron, these priests of Christianity took the graving tools of the classical philosophy they never really left, and fashioned Christianity’s golden calf in the form of their writings and formalized it in documents like the Nicene Creed. In doing so, they replaced the true mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, with “another Jesus” built on the foundation

	Imprisonment and Persecution	Plague and Collapse	Freedom	Truth	Syncretism
Israelites	Slavery in Egypt, taskmasters	Ten plagues	Escape through Red Sea	Law written with finger of God	Aaron takes Egyptian lore to fashion golden calf
Early Christians	Roman persecution	Seals of Revelation 6	Dragon of Revelation 12 thrown down	New Testament canon completed	Classical philosophy mixed in by previously pagan theologians
Reformation	Feudal system, Catholic suppression	Black Death	Reformation	Bible versions in common tongue, revival of Bible study	Retention of Catholic dogma and creedal doctrine by ex-Catholic theologians

of a “different spirit” and resulting in a “different gospel.” Intriguingly, Apis himself was considered to be part of a Trinity:

“In the Demotic Chronicle from the third century B.C.E.: ‘Apis, Apis, Apis’: that means Ptah, Re, Harsieis, who are the lords of the office of the sovereign... The three gods denote Apis. Apis is Ptah, Apis is Re, Apis is Harsieis.” (Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, pp. 256-259, after Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*. As cited by Marian Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity: The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian*, p. 304).

As we saw last month, the Trinity is built on the notion of *homoousion*. That’s like exchanging the glory of God for a golden calf. Instead of understanding the relationship between God and Jesus as something spiritual—based on God’s glory, His invisible characteristics—the Trinity stresses the idea of the consubstantiation, that Jesus and God are of the same substance, thus entirely missing the point.

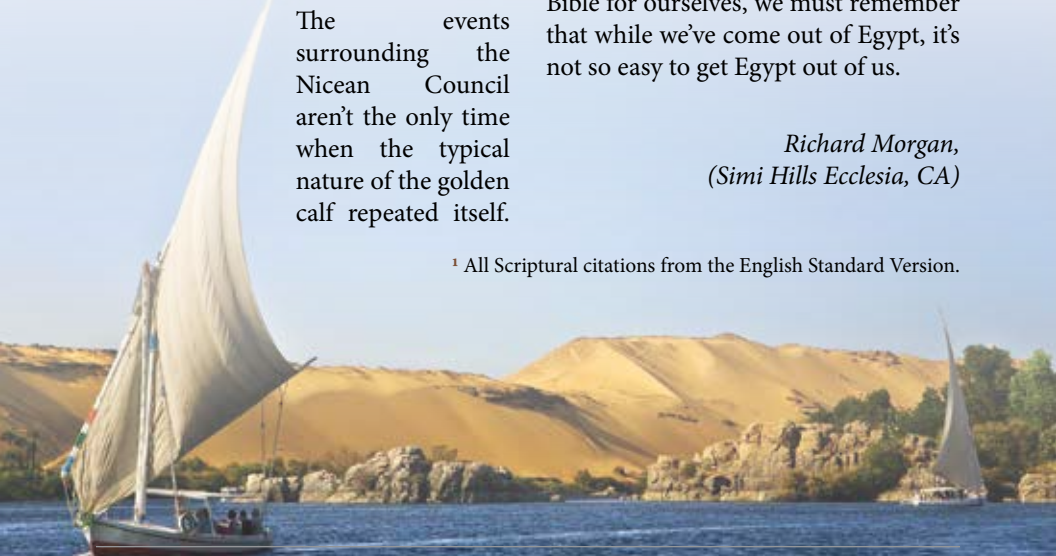
The events surrounding the Nicean Council aren’t the only time when the typical nature of the golden calf repeated itself.

For centuries during the Middle Ages, the people of Europe were bound by the chains of the feudal system. All that changed because of a plague (the Black Death) that helped cause the collapse of the feudal system, leading into the Renaissance and the Reformation. The neo-Egyptian Catholic Church lost many leading theologians, like Martin Luther (Germany), John Calvin (France and Switzerland), and Ulrich Zwingli (Switzerland). However, while the finger of God was evident in the ability men and women now had to read the Bible in the common tongue, the spirit of Catholicism was too strong. Protestantism removed many of the traditions and ideas of the church, but the Magisterial Reformation was just another syncretism of *sola scriptura* with a different gospel, Egyptian Christianity.

History always repeats itself, and, as Paul said to the Corinthians, these things happened as examples for you and me. We are not immune. Freedom is a two-edged sword, and while we delight in reading and studying the Bible for ourselves, we must remember that while we’ve come out of Egypt, it’s not so easy to get Egypt out of us.

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¹ All Scriptural citations from the English Standard Version.



SPRING VISIT TO ANTIGUA

By Chris Morse

HAVING both recently retired, my wife Sis. Alison and I traveled to Antigua for four weeks of vacation in mid-March 2022. We had visited the island some years previously, and wanted to help the small ecclesia there, currently consisting of three sisters. We met with them for four Sundays, where I

ran the Breaking of Bread (carrying out all duties). While it is a small ecclesia, thanks to the past work of a brother, they have a substantial hall which provides a good place to meet. Also present each Sunday were the extended families of the sisters of various ages, who brought a family atmosphere.

Seeing that a number of teenagers were regular attendees, we also ran a Young People's Class on three of the Sundays. This lasted twenty minutes and covered present day events, and some specific questions that they asked.

There are three sisters: Iris, Marisa and Simone, who meet each Sunday when they can rely on remote material or visitors from elsewhere, such as ourselves. Sis. Iris is a retired midwife from Antigua, who worked in Canada for many years, and retired back to Antigua. Sis. Simone works shifts, but was able to come with her three children for the four Sundays we were there. Sis. Marisa brings her children, her mother, and extended family of nephews and nieces. It was the case that the children and youths outnumbered the baptized numbers and represent the potential future audience.

It is worth mentioning that Sis. Iris is very active, given her age, and publicizes the truth whenever she can. The local taxi driver knew all about the Christadelphians and had visited on occasion. The lady who lives opposite the meeting room is also well known, having keys to the room and looking after the meeting's resident dog! Despite being a small community, they are serious about their faith and gladly welcome and cherish the support when offered.

*Chris Morse,
(Bracknell Ecclesia, UK)*



The members of the Antigua Ecclesia with Sis. Alison Morse (left)

FIVE BAPTISMS

By David Collister

IT is with great pleasure that we share the wonderful news of five baptisms in Costa Rica. Sis. Daniela González, Bro. Anthony Ramirez Ugalde, Bro. Carlos Ramírez Ugalde, Sis. Sonia Soto Arias and Sis. Carolina Chavez Hernandez were all baptized into the Lord on April 18, 2022, in what was described as a beautiful ceremony.

Daniela, Anthony and Carlos are all second-generation Christadelphians, having grown up in the ecclesia, children of members. It is wonderful to witness the new generation taking on

the saving name of Christ. Sonia has been studying for over 10 years, and attending ecclesial functions all that while. Carolina has been studying with Sis. Gladys Chavarria for about a year.

The Costa Rican brothers and sisters, together with friends, were able to share in the blessing of fellowship as they witnessed the immersion of these five new brothers and sisters.

*David Collister,
Verdugo Hills Ecclesia, CA*

See the photo of our new brothers and sisters on the next page.



**Daniela
González**



**Carolina
Chavez
Hernandez**



**Carlos
Ramirez
Ugalde**



**Anthony
Ramirez
Ugalde**



**Sonia
Soto Arias**

GUYANA JUBILEE BIBLE SCHOOL

By David Andrews

EASTER weekend of April 15-18 marked the 50th Bible School held in Guyana. The first was held in April 1969, at the Eccles Hall under the tutorship of Bro. Norman Mills and Bro. Stuart Cowlshaw, both who were from the UK. In 1969, Bro. Cowlshaw was a lecturer at the University at the West Indies in Trinidad. I was an 18-year-old from the Bartica Ecclesia, located up the Essequibo River, having migrated to Georgetown to accept a job at the Ministry of Finance.

Guyana Bible Schools are funded and supported by the Christadelphian

Bible Mission. Initially, it was the brainchild of Sis. Lorraine Mitchell, supported by senior brethren in Britain. Sis. Lorraine proposed the idea to Bro. Harry Whitaker and Bro. Alan Hayward in 1953. Back then, there was only one CBM, and it operated out of Britain.

I was excited at the first Bible School in 1969, because it was the first occasion where I witnessed such a setting of deep Bible study for rank-and-file members. This sort of thing was usually reserved for the clergy of other denominations, not laymen like us. This is a beautiful peculiarity



From the 1969 Guyana Bible School

about our community. Both our brothers and sisters come together and pour over the Word of God for a week. In those days, the Bible School lasted seven days! Later it was changed to four days, from Good Friday to the day after Easter. The school has alternated between the counties of Demerara and Berbice, with the local branch of the UK-based Auxiliary Lecturing Society (known as the Christadelphian Auxiliary Lecturing Society Guyana) taking particular responsibility for framing the program. The home ecclesia led in executing the logistics, such as accommodation of visitors and providing of meals.

In the second year (1970), we welcomed Bro. Ben Perryman of Bournemouth, UK as our main speaker. In 1972, and onward we had

such stalwarts as Bro. Wilfred Ali, Bro. Alan Eyre, Bro. Arthur Green, Bro. Ron Abel, Bro. Alan Fowler, and countless others. Some of them were medical doctors and others of Ph.D. scholarship, which added to the already high standard of Biblical inquiry.

From 2013 to the present, we have been led in study by such brethren as Ted Sleeper (our immediate past Linkman), Mark Carr (our current Linkman), Tyrone Smart and Rafeek Soolaman, (“old boys of the soil” as we may say), Stanley Owen—author of *Into all the World*, Stephen Palmer, who is one of our speakers this time around, Duncan Heaster, Clive Drepaal (an “old head” from the New Amsterdam Ecclesia) and Kitson Reid of Birmingham, UK.

This year, we were most happy to acquire the services of the following very able brethren. Bro. Stephen Whitehouse, of the Hall Green Ecclesia, Birmingham, UK, who in the capacity of main presenter, fed us with five presentations on the very exciting theme, “Jesus is Coming with Clouds.” Bro Stephen Palmer, also of the UK, was asked to make two presentations on mental health, a theme that bears much relevance for today’s younger generation in this fast paced and stressful world. He particularly pointed out that even in today’s scientific community, the value of a patient’s spiritual preferences as a key in aiding recovery, whether or not preferences were considered factually sound, was now being acknowledged. We also enjoyed Bro. Dev Ramcharan, of the Toronto West Ecclesia, Canada. He gave it to us straight by way of two talks on the subject of “Courtship!” His thoughts were rather sobering when considered in the light of the perpetual need for the males to consider and lovingly treat our partners as laborers together in the work of the gospel. For all those who are seeking answers of how to deal with balancing work-life with ecclesial life, Bro. Nigel Small of Moorestown, NJ, showed us the advantages of putting God first in our lives and trusting him to find the most workable solutions to the many challenges that will always arise. We were much comforted by way of exhortation by Bro. Samuel Edwards, of neighboring Trinidad & Tobago. He counseled us to value the added



time God is allowing us to prepare ourselves for the grand return of His son, our Lord. Lively discussion and questions were shared each morning and afternoon which served to enlighten us even further.

Extra-curricular

Special provision was made on the program for evening activities on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The regular daily program commenced at 9:00 AM and closed around 3:45 PM. However, thought was given to hosting unique features in honor of the Jubilee occasion. These events took place between 7-9 PM.

Friday night: Video interviews of many older brothers and sisters, to include Sis. Lorraine Mitchell (baptized seventy-one years ago and almost one hundred years old), Sis. Elaine Williams (baptized for 61 years), and Sis. Maudelin December (baptized for close to 60 years).



Each gave us their perspective of the growth of the Truth in Guyana during their own tenure and filled in the vital gaps in the knowledge of younger ones.

Saturday night: Bible games played online or two hours, which the young thoroughly enjoyed.

Sunday night: Talent night saw many (particularly the young) glorifying God in poetry and song.

Attendance

It was comforting to be able to share such jewels with the many brothers and sisters, friends, and young people that attended. Each session was populated with between one hundred to one hundred twenty-five screens via the Zoom platform, which easily translated to about two hundred viewers. Each day, the program made adequate allowances for lunch and refreshment breaks, during which testimonies were given by several of the elderly. This added further comfort and enlightenment to all. A once in a lifetime experience indeed! May our loving Heavenly Father shorten the days unto the coming of His glorious Kingdom.

*David Andrews,
Georgetown Ecclesia, Guyana*



ECCLESIAL NEWS

Please Note

This is the LAST ISSUE that Ecclesial News will appear in *The Tidings*.

We feel that news is much better served by being a part of our busy online presense. Ecclesial News will be constantly updated and is available at tidings.org or through our social ,edia accounts.

Please visit tidings.org to submit news items for publication.

Barrie, ON

We are grateful for divine blessing in the continuance of our small light stand here in Central Ontario on the edge of Ontario's renowned 'cottage country', having resorted to virtual services and then reopening a couple of times. We now function with a hybrid format which suits the current situation well.

Occasional feedback from the travelling public near and far indicate that we are known to them as the "church with the sign." With a four-lane highway on our front doorstep, it provides

a unique opportunity to display a brief scriptural message to rushing commuters, volumes of truck drivers and the travelling public at large to take time and engage the gracious invitation of the Gospel.

It is regrettable to report that our Sis. Maria Perks, wife of Bro. Walter Perks suddenly and untimely fell asleep in the Lord on September 27, 2020, a few days following surgery. We all miss Sis. Maria greatly and continue to seek God's blessing of comfort and consolation in the sure hope of the

resurrection to Bro. Walter in his time of loss and bereavement. Sis. Mazie and Bro. Don Berdan have also both now fallen asleep in the Lord Jesus. Sis. Mazie on Sept 2, 2018 after a long battle with Alzheimer's and Bro. Don recently on Feb. 13, 2022. He had moved to Wallaceburg to the care of his daughter, but connected via phone on Sundays as long as his health permitted. The Berdons were faithful members here since the inception of this ecclesia.

Bro. Kevin and Sis. Kim Cooper and family have moved to Manitoulin Island, ON and transferred their membership to the Manitoulin Island ecclesia. Bro. Dan and Sis. Rachelle Perks and family have moved to Australia. Bro. James and Sis. Laura Pearce and family have transferred to the Cambridge, ON Ecclesia. We commend them all in fraternal love to their respective ecclesias. On the receiving end, we take pleasure in welcoming Bro. Tom Briggs; Bro. Jason and Sis. Sylvia Grant and family, all from the former Orangeville, ON Ecclesia and look forward to their support and fellowship as we all await the day of the Lord's appearing and Kingdom.

Our thanks are extended to the many brethren who have ministered to our needs through the last few years by in-person and by virtual arrangement. We also have received much spiritual benefit through the use of recorded presentations provided by christadelphianvideo.org and others.

It is a pleasure for our ecclesia to recently give assent to assuming the role of financial sponsorship to the Lakefield Bible School (formerly Niagara Falls Bible School) which has

functioned for many years as a full-service Bible School and the venue is near Peterborough, ON. The Toronto East Ecclesia had faithfully pioneered the sponsorship from the school's beginning. Six members of our ecclesia also serve with others on the LCBS Committee.

We are looking forward to once again providing a booth at the local Oro World's Fair this year in September, Lord willing. It has been a useful opportunity to engage the public in our area and to preach a message of Hope to a world in chaos, but the venue has been closed with the onset of COVID-19.

Grant Abel

Halifax, NS

Our ecclesia, legally known as the Bedford (Central) Christadelphian Ecclesia for many years, is now called "The Halifax Christadelphians." After two years of meeting online, our ecclesia will be recommencing in-person meetings in the coming months. Lord willing, for Breaking of Bread and Bible Class services we will be returning to the Scott Manor House in September 2022 (details as in CALS Diary.) Anyone travelling to this region before then should contact the undersigned at:

nschristadelphians@gmail.com.

In 2002, shortly after our family arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, we sent out an appeal to the ecclesial world called "The Halifax Project". We asked open-hearted brothers and sisters to think about supporting our small ecclesia through holiday visits or relocating to become members. God blessed

our effort with a number of brothers and sisters who supported a domestic mission in 2002 and several others who move to the province. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nova Scotia did relatively well, benefiting from being almost an island. This and other factors have made Nova Scotia an attractive destination: more than 10,000 people moved to the province from other parts of Canada during the pandemic—including those who are able to work remotely. At this time we are renewing our appeal to brothers and sisters to consider Nova Scotia in their holiday plans, university training (the city has five universities) or relocation for work or retirement. The province is surrounded by the ocean and is filled with sites of natural beauty. Despite the recent migration to the province, real estate prices are still much below the national average. Those who move here will find a less hectic pace of life and a warm ecclesial environment. Please visit the following site to learn more about the province and opportunities here: christadelphians.ns.ca/relocate

Steve Snobelen

Sarasota, FL

This past month our ecclesia had the pleasure of visits from Bro. Ian and Sis. Judy Macfarlane and Bro. John and Sis. Tara Solomon of the Book Road, ON Ecclesia. Also, Sis. Louise Archer and Sis. Helen Pritchett of the Lapworth, UK Ecclesia along with Sis. Helen Gibson of the Largo, FL Ecclesia. We thank Bre. Macfarlane and Soloman for their words of exhortation.

The Sarasota Ecclesia is sorry to say goodbye to Bro. Terry and Sis. Jean Cannon of the Castle Bromwich, UK Ecclesia. For over 25 years they have been like family to our ecclesia. We shared many good times, both at the Hall and at their home. They will be greatly missed.

James Wilkinson

Toronto West, ON

It is with great joy that we announce the baptism of CHRISTOPHER CARRICK, son of Reuben and Wendy Carrick, on March 27, 2022. We pray that our walk together towards God's Kingdom will be mutually beneficial.

With COVID-19 restrictions gradually being lifted, we recently hosted a Senior CYC weekend at Hidden Acres Retreat which was well attended by 59 young people and 17 adults from across Ontario and Quebec. Bro. Mark Carr spoke on "Visions of the Kingdom."

We continue to stream our Memorial services and Bible classes to our members as well as those in isolation in Athens, Greece, and Lachine, Quebec, especially the ecclesias in Larissa, Greece and Montreal, Quebec, and many others in North America. We also host an online Memorial service in Swahili for members across North America and the Congo. Please contact the undersigned for links and more information. All our past services (in English) are recorded and can be viewed on our website at www.24langside.com

Brian Carrick

Thoughts on the Way "Come Away My Love"

A Hymn Based on the Song of Songs

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Eph 5:25-27).

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God (Rev 19:7-9).

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy

unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned (Song 8:6, 7).

The following Song of Christ and the Bride captures something of the New Testament theme, couched in the language of the Song of Songs. (The second column gives some of the Bible passages which are echoed in the Song.)

This may be sung with arrangements for male (Christ) and female (Bride) voices, to the tune of William Walker's "New Britain" (common meter, 8.6.8.6). This tune was first associated with the words for John Newton's "Amazing Grace" in 1835, and has since become the traditional music for that most popular hymn.

George Booker,
(Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX)

(1) Christ:	Arise and come away, my love, The winter now is past. The singing of the birds is come; The earth is green at last.	Song 2:10; 2:13 2:11 2:12
(2) Bride:	I rise and follow you, Belov'd, At last the shadows flee: The roses and the lilies grow Under the apple tree.	Song 1:8 2:17; 4:6 2:1,2 2:3; 8:5
(3) Christ:	Arise and come away, my love, The air is sweet outside. The scent of blossoms on the wind Is carried far and wide.	Song 2:10; 2:13 2:14 1:14; 7:12
(4) Bride:	For my Belov'd is young and fair, And my Belov'd is mine, The altogether lovely One, Both human and divine.	Song 6:10 2:16; 6:3 5:16
(5) Christ:	How beautiful you are, and fair, Your desire is all toward me; A spring shut up, a fountain sealed, Until your Lord you see.	Song 1:8,10,15; 2:10 6:12 4:12,15
(6) Bride:	Your lips are milk and honeycomb, Your love is pure delight, And I have waited much too long, Alone, for you at night.	Song 5:1; 6:2 1:4; 2:3 5:6-8 3:1; 5:2
(7) Christ:	For love is stronger far than death; And you, my precious dove, Are set a seal upon my heart And on my hands, my love.	Song 8:6-7
(8) Bride:	I rise and follow you, Belov'd. The winter now is past; The singing of the birds is come. The earth is green at last.	Song 2:10; 2:13 2:11 2:12

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