

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1514



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The Resurrection of the Dead – page 7
What it's like to be a Christadelphian – page 16

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

124th Year

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1514



A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to mankind; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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Publisher: The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity – Number 248352

Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained either from one of the Glad Tidings Distributors listed above, or from one of the contact addresses listed on the back cover.

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Acknowledgements

Photographs:

*Cover: Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland – Dean Pugh
Page 16: Christadelphians in Scotland – Kirsty MacDonald*

Other Illustrations:

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The Evidence – You Decide

People who walk see much more of their surroundings than those who travel by bike, bus or car. They travel at a slower pace of course and are able to hear, see and smell things the others can't experience.

But not everyone who walks will be that receptive. Nowadays people walk along with their iPods plugged in, their mobile phones glued to their ears or their minds far away from their actual surroundings. Every walker could examine his or her surroundings at the same level of consciousness, but not all do.

Other Worlds

Even if you were fully focused on what was going on around you, there would be much you did not or could not see. People

sometimes say that you are never far away from a rat! They live in the drains and sewers positioned below the streets and pavements, together with all sorts of other creatures we would rather not know about.

Then there are microbes which are invisible to the naked eye. And above our eye-level another world exists at rooftop level, and beyond – birds, planes, satellites, even a space station, stars and countless galaxies. Nobody could ever take it all in, but it's there just the same!

A man called around recently to say that his firm had flown over our street and taken a picture of our house from above. He wanted to know if we

wanted to buy the picture that had been taken from the plane and it gave us a chance to see what our roof was looking like, and the replacement roof tiles that had recently been fitted! Then we had to make our minds up whether we wanted the picture or not.

Different Perspective

Anyone who is presented with a different view of life has to make that judgement – do they want to make it their own, or not? For the Bible presents a unique perspective: it shows us human life from God's point of view and that often leaves much to be desired.

Many ancient histories concentrate on the best aspects of the rulers they describe, glorifying them or at

least passing over any weaknesses or faults that might have existed. They wrote at a time when a less than flattering account might have cost the historian his life!

By contrast the Bible gives us a true account of selected people and happenings just as they occurred – 'warts and all', as we might say. Even its heroes, like Abraham, Moses, David, Hezekiah and Josiah had their faults and we know all about them. Men who gave their lives for what they believed – like the apostles Paul and Peter – are equally portrayed as flawed human beings who made mistakes just like all of us. In this, as well as in many other ways, the Bible has the ring of truth.



God speaks out!

The essential difference about the Bible, compared with any other book, is that it tells us about God's plan to rescue the earth and mankind from the mess that we now find ourselves in. Long ago God sent Jesus to save mankind from sin and he lived and died so that we can be set free from the bondage of mortality. His death and resurrection make it possible for weak and frail people like us to escape the unconscious state of death and come back to conscious existence. And the new life that God offers, by resurrection, is not the same sort of troubled existence we now experience. One writer called the new life in Christ "life indeed" when he gave this advice to people who were well off:

*"As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so **that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed**" (1 Timothy 6:17-19 RSV).*

Take another look

As we progress through life we become more understanding of the views and attitudes of other people, or at least we should become like that if we reflect that our own position in life has changed as we gained more experience. One of the skills for life that we acquire is the ability to check things and form our own judgements. We become accustomed to weighing things up and deciding whether we approve or disapprove; whether we agree or disagree.

This issue of the magazine invites you to think again about some things in life that you may have overlooked. It offers a different perspective because Christadelphians are people who believe the Bible and try to make it the basis of their lives. We believe that God has amply demonstrated His existence by the things that He has made – the world He created. And we think that the Bible gives a lot of reasoned information to enable us to check things out. God has never expected people to take a leap in the dark – to trust in Him without any evidence. It was always the pattern in Bible times that people were given reasons for believing before God asked them to commit themselves to what He was asking.

↘ *In Old Testament times prophets gave short-term predictions which had to be seen to be true so that you could know that their long-term predictions were equally accurate (see Deuteronomy 18:18-22).*

↘ *In New Testament times we find the apostles reasoning out of the Scriptures to show that the Old Testament predictions had been fulfilled by Jesus thus showing that he would fulfil all the rest in God's good time (see Acts 17:2-3; 18:4,19).*

So why not shift your perspective for once? Take a view from the rooftops – well, from a higher position than usual. Examine the evidence afresh or perhaps for the first time, and see if the Bible message speaks to you. We can only offer some of the available evidence. It's for you to decide what you think of it.

Editor

The Evidence of Creation

Over the last few years, the teaching of the theory of evolution within schools has become the norm. In natural history documentaries, we are regularly told of how wonderful natural selection has been in producing animals and plants which fit precisely into a particular niche. For many people, Darwin's theory of evolution is the only acceptable process by which the world we see around us came into existence. But there is an alternative to this theory.

Creation

The Bible is very clear that God is the Creator. The Creation is mentioned throughout the Bible. Here are three examples:

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6);

"For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other'" (Isaiah 45:18);

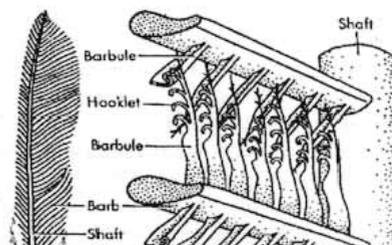
"God, who made the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is he worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, since he gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24,25).

Design

No matter where we look around us,

we see examples of design in nature; and design gives evidence for a Designer. There are many examples of systems which work together in nature, and without one, the other provides no advantage.

A wonderful example of this is the feather, which when examined closely shows multiple barbules on either side of the barb; on one side they have hooks, on the other they are plain.



When the wing moves down, the hooks interlock with the plain barbules, stopping the passage of air, and allowing lift. However, as the wing moves up, air can pass through freely, minimizing the energy used by the bird to fly. This is only one example of design in nature – anyone who cares to look can find millions of examples of systems which are often described as irreducibly complex.¹

Pattern

The Golden Ratio is a mathematical ratio seen throughout nature - for example, in the arrangement of the chambers within shells, seed patterns of many flowers, and even in the structure of hurricanes! It is related to a sequence of numbers known as "Fibonacci numbers", which can again



be seen throughout nature. Unlike the ability to run faster, or jump higher (which may be examples cited by evolutionists to support the theory of natural selection) there is NO evolutionary reason why these mathematical proportions should lead to improved survival – and therefore why we should find examples of this pattern again and again. Once again, the evidence points to a Designer. Professor Paul Dirac (a theoretical physicist who held the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics at Cambridge University) said “God is a mathematician of a very high order, and he used very advanced mathematics in constructing the universe”.

Bible

It's not only in biological systems that we see evidence of design. Bible teaching about the relationship man has (or should have) with his fellow man is in *direct* contravention of the theory of natural selection. Jesus himself said:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

However, according to Darwinian theory we are in a constant battle to survive, and pass on our genes (an argument taken to its fullest extent in Richard Dawkin's book *The Selfish Gene*). Instead of “loving our neigh-

bour” (as the Bible teaches), we should be going out to take his food and steal his mate, so that OUR offspring survive (and not his). Care and compassion are at odds with natural selection, but demonstrate that God created us like this.²

Richard Dawkins said “after Darwin you can be an intellectually fulfilled atheist” – and he was right of course. Belief in the theory of evolution takes away any need for God; but, more importantly, to believe in Creation means there is a Creator, who is greater than we are, and therefore we must respond to Him.

The Creator speaks to us through the pages of the Bible, and shows us that not only did He create each one of us, as well as the world we live in – He has a new Creation in store. This is to be revealed when His son returns to establish His worldwide kingdom.

An article like this can only scratch the surface of this subject. There is a *huge* amount of evidence out there. Examine it for yourself – and respond to the One who made all things. Here's one response recorded in the pages of Scripture:

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

Drew Smith

1 For other examples, see *Darwin's Black Box* read by Michael Behe, published by Simon & Schuster, 1996

2 To see these arguments developed further read *Darwinian Fairytales* by David Stove, published by Ashgate Publishing, 1996.

The Resurrection of the Dead

In the first letter the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he deals with problems some believers had about the prospect of resurrection from the dead – the true Christian hope of life after death – and he faces up to the problem fairly and squarely. To show how important the topic really is he said this:

- *“If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!;*
- *“Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished;*
- *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable”*

(1 Corinthians 15: 17–19).

This was not just Paul’s own reasoning. He was an inspired apostle, which means that he wrote with God’s guidance and authority, so this tells it as it is. The record could not be more emphatic in laying down the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is vital to the hope of Christians. It is so fundamental that if it did not happen then there is nothing to hope for.

The attempts we might make in life to say “no” to self (suppressing the desires of the flesh), and say “yes” to serving God are pointless if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead. If that is the case, Paul’s logical argument says that therefore we are to be pitied!

Did it Happen?

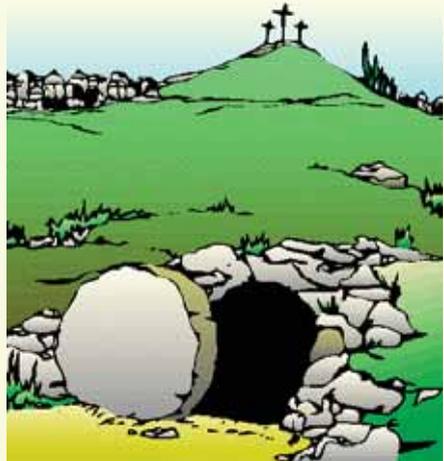
As the resurrection is so crucial to the

Christian message we need to be confident that it did actually happen, otherwise anyone becoming a Christian would be embracing a futile faith. The Bible says that:

“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

So it is to the Word of God we must look to try to piece together the evidence for the resurrection being a reality. The Bible is an historical account of what happened when Jesus died and rose again and because it is inspired by God we can rely upon its accuracy. But does it make logical sense when we examine the evidence for ourselves?

The table overleaf contains the Bible references for some very important points which you can follow up for yourself. This is a Scriptural basis which explains why Christadelphians are convinced that Jesus did die and that God raised him from the dead.



Bible Evidence		
EVENT	REFERENCES	COMMENT
Jesus did die.	Luke 23:46-47; Mark 15:43-45	Roman soldiers who executed people all the time declared he was dead. So he was dead!
Jesus was buried in a sepulchre.	John 19:41-42; Matthew 27:60	It belonged to a rich man and the women watched where Jesus was buried.
The sepulchre was sealed.	Matthew 27:60,66	An enormous stone was placed over the entrance to the grave.
Guards watched the tomb.	Matthew 27:65-66	Nobody could have come to steal the body.
Jesus was wrapped in grave clothes that were treated with spices.	John 19:39-40	Some people say that Jesus just fainted and revived in the tomb. But he was wrapped up in grave clothes and in such a weakened state he could not remove these, push away the stone and frighten the guards.
Soldiers had to be bribed to say his disciples had stolen the body.	Matthew 28:12-15	No bribe would be needed if this were true!
Jesus appeared to many witnesses.	See the list below	These were spread over many weeks and were in quite different locations.

Appearances

The many appearances of the risen Christ include the following:

- *Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:10-18)*
- *The women returning from the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10).*
- *Disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32; Mark 16:12-13).*
- *Peter in Jerusalem (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).*
- *To his disciples in a locked room in Jerusalem. The apostle Thomas wasn't there at that time (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23).*
- *To his disciples, this time Thomas was present (John 20:24-29).*
- *To seven of his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-24).*
- *He was seen by 500 believers at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).*
- *James (1 Corinthians 15:7).*

- *Eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20).*
- *At his ascension (Luke 24:50-53).*
- *Seen by Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8).*
- *Seen by Stephen (Acts 7:55).*

Ring of Truth

One feels certain that if this proof was produced in a modern day court the evidence would be indisputable that Jesus Christ died and was raised from the dead. Peter, a close disciple of Jesus, spoke to a crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, nearly two months after the resurrection, and this is what he said:

“Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it” (Acts 2:22–24).

The Bible never tries to put a gloss on the events of Jesus’ death. It shows that Peter was actually a broken man before the resurrection! He could not deal with Jesus’ death and denied him (see Matthew 26:69-75). However, as the list of witnesses has shown, Jesus appeared to Peter, and by appearing to him convinced him that the resurrection was a reality. In that speech on the day of Pentecost Peter sums up his message like this: *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32).*

Don’t forget, he was saying this within a few hundred yards of where the events had taken place, to many people who were eyewitnesses of the events, and when all of them could have gone and checked up whether his account was true or not.

All Change!

The resurrection changed the lives of these witnesses, including the apostle Peter. Rather than being depressed and disconsolate, they went out preaching the good news that Jesus was alive and well, living in heaven until that time when he will return to reign on earth. They were so convinced that this was true that they were ready to suffer imprisonment, torture and even death. They were that certain that their faith was well founded.

When the apostle Paul was in court before Roman officials he took the opportunity to witness to the change that had taken place in his life when he had seen a vision of the risen Christ. Central to that witness was his belief in resurrection, and his understanding that the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the fact *“that the Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).* He said *“this has not been done in a corner.”* In other words there was nothing secret about what happened to Jesus. The evidence was clear for all thinking people to see.

There is no secret. The evidence is there and it is surely indisputable. The choice we have to make is whether to reject the evidence and live a life with no hope, or to accept it and change our life too, when we resolve to follow Jesus.

John Owen

How I Became a Christadelphian

It may sound presumptuous or even conceited to assume that something unexpected can occur in our lives, from which we can benefit or take pleasure, just because we believe that God has seen fit to do something particular for us.

Mysterious Ways

Nevertheless we find that wonderful, unforeseen (by us, that is) things do happen, and perhaps the full extent of the thing is not immediately evident to us. William Cowper the hymn writer wrote a hymn which includes the line:

*“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform...”*

We are probably used to hearing this line, or its first part at least, said with an element of humour or irony; but God does bring things to pass which either involve or affect us as individuals. There are many different examples of this kind of thing in the Bible. Here are two passages which both explain God’s purpose with mankind, and record the response which others have



made over the centuries. For the work of sharing the Scriptures with those who would listen and respond – in due course that included me – is a vital part of the Christian message. Properly received and understood, the Bible can influence the course of your life as it has mine. It can help you find the knowledge or understanding to develop your faith, for that has made my life what it is today.

Great Commission

Here are the two passages that tell us that God wants to share His message of salvation as widely as possible:

“And he (Jesus) said to them (his disciples), ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15–16).

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

The disciples and apostles took this commission very seriously and went to great lengths to preach the gospel so that the apostle Paul could say to the believers in Colossae:

“...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister” (Colossians 1:23, NKJV).

How the gospel came to me

During my 24th summer I was looking at spending 3 weeks holiday travelling with my mate Andy by rail across Europe, with the hoped-for destination of that great crossroads of the ancient world – Istanbul. In the event, late in the day we were asked if we would like to team up with some other friends who were heading to the South of France. There were six of them, and they thought another two might help with the hiring of a couple of cars, so we agreed – if we were able to get booked on the holiday. We did, and September saw us off by train, ferry, train and finally road to the quiet little resort of St. Aygulf on the French Riviera.

On our first day there, Andy met a young Englishwoman who was also travelling with a friend, and it had been suggested that the four of us meet up the next evening. This duly happened, with the result that we were very happy to spend time together as the days went by. My new companion mentioned to me that she was a Christadelphian, and explained what this meant to her. I had no problem with this – I was a regular churchgoer, but had felt that my faith was missing something vital.

It transpired that, at the end of the week, we were all due to travel back on the same train and spend the next night in London before making our various ways back north. Andy and I, who still had some time left on holiday, were asked if we would like to break our journey home in Yorkshire where we could be put up for a few days, and this also came to pass! What happened after that was that I became a regular visitor to that warm and welcoming home, and found myself

attending Sunday services and midweek classes with my special friend and mentor.

The Penny Dropped!

I cannot say exactly what it was that made the penny drop: suffice it to say that just over 2 years after this “chance” meeting, I understood that I needed, and wanted, to be interviewed for baptism. This was arranged with the brethren at Glasgow South, with whom I was now well familiar; I was duly interviewed to make sure that I had a saving faith and was baptized a few days later: adult baptism – done with a complete understanding of why I was being baptised.

This was witnessed by the young woman, and her Mum, who had between them sown the seed and watered it, and pointed me in the right direction.

What a wonderful thing had been given to me – the opportunity of everlasting life through the gospel message. It is a gift and which still serves me day by day. Now it’s my privilege to pass the message on to you.

Bob Watt

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www.gladtidingsmagazine.org



The Moon and I

From a child I've always been fascinated by the moon. To me it looked as if it was born, grew to maturity, and then died every month. So when in my twenties man landed on the moon I realised the excitement of the occasion.

Select Few

Only twelve men have ever set foot on the moon: the first in 1969 and the last in 1972. Since returning, two have died of natural causes, and one died in a motorbike accident. Imagine that, going all the way to the moon and back then being killed in an accident!

Only twenty-four men have ever left the earth's atmosphere and then ventured onto another planet, although some three hundred or more have gone into space. And, of course at this very moment the astronauts on the international space station are circling the earth in low orbit, going round the earth eight times a day.

Still Scene

One of the astronauts (David Scott, Apollo 15) who went to the moon said this:

"To an earthling, one of the moon's most striking features was its stillness, with no atmosphere, and no wind, the only movements we could detect on the lunar surface apart from our own, were the gradually shifting shadows, cast to the side of rocks and the rims of craters by the sun slowly rising higher in the sky. There were no other features, no trees, no bushes, rivers,

streams, flowers, grass, animals or birds, none of the signs of nature. There was no sound either apart from the humming of the equipment in our backpacks, there was no cloud, haze or mist, and there appeared to be no colour. The sky was pitch black, except for the deep blue and white of our own planet, suspended high in the sky like a Christmas tree ornament".



With this in mind their thoughts were of this wonderful earth which they had left behind, which to us all is our home, and although under the curse of sin, such a wonderful place of natural beauty containing all the resources that feed us, and provide for our existence. Long ago the Bible account summed up the Creation in these words:

"Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16).

Later we are told that "God saw that it was good" (1:18).

When we have an eclipse of the sun, the moon just perfectly covers it, so

that the solar flares from the sun can be studied, and scientists can understand more about its heat source. All God's work is finished to its finest detail. If only all our work was done to the same level of conscientiousness. We need to examine and to ask ourselves, did this all just happen by complete coincidence, or is there a greater power at work controlling the heavens and the earth?

Signs in the Sun & Moon

We are told this about the events that will happen before the return to earth of Jesus Christ:

"... there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25–27).

How literal these words are it is impossible to say. But we do seem to see some very frightening things around in the world today. Things have certainly changed since I was a young boy.

If we go to the last book of the Bible, we read that the *"city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light"* (Revelation 21:23). This is talking about a new order of things when the Kingdom of God is established on earth in which Jesus (the Lamb) is the ruler. He has a *"Book of Life"* (21:27) and those whose names are written there get to share with him in the wonderful time that is coming. We need to examine the evi-

dence and decide whether we through faith might be found worthy of such a calling, and apply ourselves to God's Word. We need to ask that our sins might be forgiven through baptism and be constantly associating ourselves with the Lord Jesus so that we might become more like him as we journey through life.

Doubters

Strangely enough just as there are people who doubt the truth of the Bible, there are many who doubt that the Americans ever landed on the moon. As a person who lived through the period it was very real at the time, and I have never seen or heard any evidence that would make me doubt that it was all true.

When you read the Bible, many of the characters (including the disciples) lived through the events described and were witnesses to the events that happened up to the death of Christ. They didn't always believe straight away.

Thomas was one of the disciples who was absent when Jesus appeared to the rest of the group and he would not believe until he had seen the wounds in Jesus' hands and side. The women who went to the tomb and found it empty were distressed that the body was not there. When they came back with the news that they had met the risen Jesus the disciples couldn't believe that what they said was true. But they and many more saw the evidence and made their decision. They became believers!

What is your decision? Many people refuse to even look at the evidence. Will you be one of those people, or will you choose life?

Paul Davison

How to be Beautiful Forever

Unfortunately there is no cream or powder that can achieve this. There may be one or two that make someone appear to the eye to be beautiful for a little while.

But that sort of beauty soon fades away, and the cosmetic must be applied again and again. Even then it is only skin deep.

The beauty that will last forever is beauty of a different sort. It is the work of the Great Creator and evidence of His sort of beauty is to be found everywhere. He doesn't need creams or powders to make things lovely.



Just look at all the flowers God has made for us to enjoy, each one with natural beauty flowing out from within each petal. The plastic imitations you sometimes see might be clever, but their beauty cannot begin to be compared to the real thing.

The recipe

There is only one recipe for real natural beauty that will last forever and, as with all products we buy, we have to read the instructions if we want to make the most of it. God, in His goodness, has given each of us a recipe for everlasting beauty. He promises that if we follow the recipe He has laid down in His Book – the Bible – we will have inner natural beauty forever!

The demonstration

God sent His son, the Lord Jesus, as proof of His promise, and Jesus lived a beautiful life. As one writer explained it:

“The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him” (John 1:17–18).

No one can deny that beauty shone out from within Jesus in everything he said and did. The Lord Jesus had compassion on those in distress, he healed the sick, he fed the hungry and those that heard him speak said, *“No man ever spoke like this man” (John 7:46).*

The teaching

Every day Jesus taught words of salvation offering the eternal life that God has promised to all mankind. Fortunately His words are carefully and faithfully recorded in the Bible for us to read, so the offer He made is still open. We have the privilege of being able to read for ourselves and to take

up the challenge to follow the Lord Jesus. That means that we can journey along the Way – the only right way – that leads to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

The life

The real beauty – the one that lasts forever – is the quality of life that Jesus demonstrated. It's not the beauty of appearance, for we know nothing about how Jesus looked, but the beauty of character. Would you like to be beautiful for ever, living with beautiful people in a beautiful world? That beauty is a gift from the Creator of all things: yours for the having.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Dorothy Thomson



Life's Garden

The people you meet in Life's garden are flowers of every colour and hue,
There are greedy, vain and stuck-up ones, and those who just love to rob you;
But others you meet are kind hearted, and willing to help you along,
When the days are so dreary and darkened and everything seems to go wrong.
You too are a flower in this garden, no matter how young or how old,
And the actions and words that you utter, to others your colour unfold;
You need not have learning or riches to say a kind word or to smile,
To help others out of their ditches, or perhaps help them over the stile,
None of us know just what's ahead, or what we'll need others to do,
So in your quiet moments, just ponder;
What kind of a flower are you?

Dorothy Thomson

What it's like to be a Christadelphian

I have been a baptised member of the Christadelphian community since I was 18 years old. I celebrated my 40th birthday this year and this has given me reason to pause and to reflect on my life so far.

Many things have happened in my forty years, the most significant being my baptism, my marriage (almost 20 years and counting!) and the births of my three children.

The life of a committed Christian is not an easy or restful path; it is full of decisions that can be hard or painful especially for someone like me who now lives without my biological family.

They have chosen their own paths; they are good people, but just not interested in God's offer to be part of His family forever. I say "biological family" because in our community I have hundreds of brothers and sisters, both young and old, who fulfil a great wealth of roles that make me and them a part of my extended family, by love and friendship.

How it began

The Bible gives this wise counsel:

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

I was introduced to Christadelphians aged 3, when my parents decided to send my siblings and me to Sunday

School. The friends I made there when just 3 are still part of my life, even though I now live 300 miles from where I started!

At 40 years old it's nice knowing I have friends of that length of time. All my school chums have disappeared, and ex-neighbours have vanished into the ether and become two dimensional memories. In many ways my connections to my ecclesial family have become my lifeline and help me to make sense of the crazy world we live in. I know that no matter what happens in my life there will always be someone to hold me up, or pick me up and help me as I have need because they, like me, follow the example of our Lord Jesus and put others above themselves.

What it's like

Living in both "camps" as a member of a congregation and as a daughter of a family with no real belief system is challenging. My biological family has learned that this is one very important and large part of my life. They have become accepting and supportive of



my faith. They even come with me sometimes, and I live with the hope that they will accept God as a part of their lives – but it must be a decision of their own heart, not anyone else's.

Bashing my family about the head with my Bible won't have any effect other than to make them angry with me. But by quiet and respectful comments on life and by my continuing example and living God's way, I can slowly teach them what Christ means to me and what he could mean to them.

Being part of our community is being part of a huge family – being with people who love you unconditionally despite your faults and flaws! But like a real family we argue and rub each other up the wrong way from time to time because, after all, we are all human (for now). But unlike a real family, God has given us the tools we need to resolve our conflicts in the right ways so we can remain a family

without needing to split from each other. For the Bible says:

“He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly” (Proverbs 14:29).

The difference

I shudder to think what my life would be like without God, His Son Jesus, my faith, my family, my community. Having someone and something to believe in which I know will never let me down is the most comforting feeling.

If all else in my life “goes south” then no matter what, I will always have God. And I can't wait for His eternal Kingdom to be set up so the ills and evil in this world can be done away with and the world can finally be a place of love, peace and safety.

Nikki Smith

Our Choices

**We cannot change the past but learn its lessons,
The foolish things we've done and now regret;
Reflecting on the need for Godly Wisdom,
And then improving ways we can correct.**

**We cannot change the past, it's gone forever;
The good times and the sad are set in stone,
But how we live the present is important,
For choices which we make are ours alone.**

**So each new day, as we wake in the present
May how we live bring blessings that will last;
For soon the sun will set on the horizon
And today will join the others in the past**

Colleen Simons

Is What We Believe Important?

They were the religious leaders of the people – the Saducees and Pharisees – and they were very annoyed. In fact they were livid. Who did these people think they were anyway? And what did they think they were doing?

Rumour-Mongering?

They had first heard about them on the Day of Pentecost when that man Peter had talked publicly in Jerusalem about the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. He had even accused them, the authorities, of arranging his death. Now Peter's people were saying that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

The trouble was that some people believed them and were even feeling guilty because they had been persuaded by the authorities to call for his crucifixion. Now they were asking what they needed to do to be saved. Peter had told them that they should repent, believe and be baptised:

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38,39).

Now they were doing this in their thousands (Acts 2:41), repenting of their past actions and getting baptized in the name of Jesus. What was even worse, some priests were converting to this new teaching (Acts 6:7). Something had to be done!

Beliefs on Trial

These followers of Jesus of Nazareth were increasing so rapidly that they had even started to organise them-

selves to the point where some were being appointed as deacons, to see to the welfare of their new members. This enabled the leaders to spend their time preaching and converting even more followers (Acts 6:13,14).

Even these deacons were a problem to the authorities because they were making their beliefs known to any who were prepared to listen. They had arrested one of these, a man named Stephen, so they would see what he had to say for himself. The 7th chapter of Acts records how the authorities put him on trial and gave him the opportunity to make his defence in answer to the charges they had made:

“This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” (Acts 6:13,14).

Stephen's Speech

It is interesting to note that Stephen didn't defend himself at all, but actually became the accuser. He analysed their national history of which they were so proud and brought out many spiritual lessons. For instance, he pointed out that Abraham is not only the father of the nation of Israel, but is also the one through whom the promises were made – promises that would affect the Gentile believer in Jesus Christ as well as the Jews. Such people who would later become known as Christians.

Throughout the address Stephen pointed out to the religious leaders how often the nation of Israel contravened the commandments of God and went their own way. He observed that they had often been punished as a result of these actions, and demonstrated how they, the Pharisees and Sadducees, had done exactly the same thing in rejecting the Messiah when they conspired to have Jesus put to death.

There are of course lessons to be learned from this account. They, the religious leaders, were claiming to be the ones who understood the message that God had given them, and yet they had not only misunderstood the message but were leading the people astray with their pronouncements. They were even persecuting those who were preaching the true gospel message. The same thing is happening in our day. That is why there are so many churches preaching differing doctrines. They can't all be right, so we each individually need to read for ourselves what God is telling us in His Word, the Bible.

The Outcome

The leaders were not able to refute what Stephen was saying, so they stoned him to death instead. This is often the reaction of those who cannot justify their religious position from the Bible, even today. When they cannot resort to physical violence they might use verbal violence instead, and brand those who disagree with them as 'cults'. Beware of people who do this, because it often shows that they are not able to justify their own pronouncements from Scripture.

There was a man there at the time Stephen was stoned to death whose name was Saul, and he was consent-

ing to Stephen's death (Acts 7:58). The next chapter of Acts tells how he went to Damascus to continue the persecution of the believers, and how he was converted while on his way. That day Saul came to realise how wrong he had been to help in the persecution of the believers, and he became the great apostle Paul (having changed his name) and brought the true gospel message to much of the then known world.

Beliefs really matter!

There are lessons for us all in these chapters. Holding on tenaciously to beliefs we have always held, may not be the way to eventual salvation. It is far better to look for the true gospel message in the pages of God's own book, the Bible. This is what the apostle Paul did and he found the truth, having rejected the teachings of the misguided religious leaders of his day. As a result he was able to say this towards the end of his life:

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

He gave us further good advice when he said on more than one occasion that we should try to follow his good example:

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

So what we believe really is important if we want to become like Jesus and however cherished our religious views might be it is always advisable to open our Bible and check them against its message.

Bob Hardy

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