

CHRISTADELPHIAN

Advocate

A monthly magazine in defense of the "Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ" as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to "Taking Out A People For Yahweh's Name"



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Function	Name	Email
Subscriptions and changes of address should be sent to the Treasurer.		
SUBSCRIPTIONS Treasurer	Casey King	kerrydouglas42@gmail.com
Material for publication should be sent to the Editor.		
Editor	Jim Washeck*	editor@christadelphianadvocate.org
Secretary	Josh Vest*	secretary@christadelphianadvocate.org
Questions & Answers	Ken Wood*	question@christadelphianadvocate.org
Apologetics	Bill Farrar	whf@sympatico.ca
Exposition/ Exhortation	Mike MacDonald	mikedcol@hotmail.com
Prophecy	Jay Johnson	fairsize@gmail.com
From Our Past	Jim Henley	jhandmehenley@cox.net
Ecclesial News	Kathy Washeck	kwasheck@hotmail.com
Digital Coordinator	Andrew Johnson	andrewjart@gmail.com
BOOKSTORE	Casey King	books@christadelphianadvocate.org
WEBSITE	www.christadelphianadvocate.org	

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FRONT COVER PICTURE: The depiction of Elihu, Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, and Zophar on the front cover is another illustration produced by Brother Andrew Johnson; posted and available for download on the *Advocate* website's digital "Resource Library."

He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

Jeremiah 23:28

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NO. 04

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

The World's Economy – Past, Present, and Future

We are all too familiar with the devastating effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the lives and health of individuals in this country and the world at large. The coronavirus has taken its toll in the number of lives claimed, now in the millions world-wide. How could something so small (a minuscule 120 nanometers in diameter – 100 times smaller than a red blood cell) have such a catastrophic impact on this entire planet? Its virulence and deadliness are actually milder than those of some other pathogens; yet this virus and its unquenchable transmission rate has done colossal damage to economies around the world. Entire nations have been forced into “lockdown” with untold job losses and business failures. Unprecedented efforts to stimulate the US economy and others have not proven successful to date. The shutdowns, accelerated borrowing and spending have plunged the world into the worst recession since the Great Depression. **This current pandemic has proven how fragile the world's financial system is, and how the economies of numerous nations can so quickly be pushed to the tipping point.** We know that it is a “house of cards” that could fall at any moment.

Israel's Government of the Past

Three thousand years ago, the nation of Israel demanded that Samuel give them a king like the other nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5). It displeased Samuel, yet Yahweh told him to allow Israel to have a king *for they have not rejected thee, but have rejected me, that I should not reign over them* (vss. 6-7). God told Samuel to *protest solemnly unto them* – to tell the Israelites they were making a huge mistake (vs. 9). The prophet then proceeds to give the people a stern warning concerning how their king would rule:

- He would recruit the most talented young people in the



land for his own gain: filling positions in an ever-expanding bureaucracy; drafting the most able-bodied young men to be his *instruments of war* (vss. 11-13).

- He would take the best *fields and vineyards and olive yards* from the citizenry (vs. 14).
- He would tax the people and use the proceeds selfishly, giving it to his officers and his servants. Even laborers would have to devote a portion of their time to the king's service (vss. 15-16).
- Effectively, the people would end up being their king's *servants* (vs. 17).
- Then, under the oppressive weight of his government, the Israelites would cry out to God, but *the LORD will not hear you in that day* (vs. 18).

Even after this solemn protest from Samuel, Israel refused to heed God's warning and instead chose to *have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations...* (vss. 19-20).

Governments Today

With that in mind, we should not be surprised by our governments of today – by their inefficiencies, burdensome taxes, endless wars and all too often, corruption. Like every other administration on Earth, human governments and economic systems have flaws. Human kings and man's way of governing have resulted exactly in how the prophet Samuel said it would be for the nation of Israel. People's expectations are that their governments can solve all their problems, and that if one "king" has not done well in their opinion, then a change in administration will make things better. This did happen on occasion with the ancient nation of Judah when an evil king was replaced by a righteous one. Historically, world leaders have not been successful in improving their nations' economies, at least for any period of time.

We know that change is coming and there is a solution to these ever-increasing problems within the world and its governing bodies.

Even in times of peace, most human governments have not been able to curtail high taxes, eliminate debt, or balance their national budget. The US national debt has steeply risen for years, and the curve is only getting steeper. In just twenty years of this new century, the national debt has increased from \$6 trillion to \$27 trillion. When there is a national crisis such as with the current pandemic, the government tries

to intervene, but it is only a short-lived, temporary fix. It is a sad picture that the richest, most prosperous nation in the world cannot solve its fiscal problems, to say nothing of its battle against the current health crisis.

We understand that greed for wealth and power is at the root of many of man's problems, as James testifies in chapter 4: *Ye lust and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain... that ye may consume it upon your own lusts... Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* (vss. 2-3, 5) Since the days of Adam, mankind in general has ignored this proposition and instead sought after wealth and riches on his own terms. It is natural for human nature to covet. The Apostle Paul, we know, attributed *the love of money as the root of all evil* (1 Timothy 6:10). The competitive nature in man and the greed for wealth must change before economic reform will ever last.

We know that change is coming and there is a solution to these ever-increasing problems within the world and its governing bodies. Yahweh, we pray, will soon revolutionize this world's economy when His Son returns to the Earth. It would be an understatement to describe it as economic reform, for it will involve a complete overturning of the "kingdoms of men." What then will be the economic policies of God's soon-coming Kingdom?

The Economy of the Kingdom Age

Many prophecies describe the great tribulation of the "Day of the LORD" that will come upon the whole earth at the time of Christ's return. Isaiah 24 describes the devastation of these end-time events. In verse 1, it says that the LORD will essentially turn the earth upside down, making it "waste" and "empty." It will be a time of cleansing, to start with a clean slate. In Zechariah 14, after the prophet describes the final climactic battle that will take place around Jerusalem, we read something very significant in verse 14, *And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.* In one fell swoop, the complex, debt-ridden, inefficient, wasteful and selfish economic systems of man will be wiped away. Available wealth will be gathered and there will be a fresh start for the new "economy" in the Kingdom Age.

Of course, it will take much more than a fresh start to change man's faulty systems of economics. Mankind will need to be re-educated and re-directed according to God's laws. When Christ returns, he will bring justice and *rebuke strong nations afar off*; and the remaining instruments of war will be converted into *plowshares and pruninghooks* (Micah 4:3). This will radically change the world's economy: no more multibillion-dollar defense spending and no more giant corporations controlling it.

Return to an Agrarian Society

The millennial reign of the righteous King will bring about a wholesale change to the basis of the world's economy, as the prophet Micah describes: *But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it* (vs. 4). Everyone will possess their own land and not covet their neighbor's property or possessions. The world economy will indeed return to one based upon an agrarian society as it was in the beginning when God formed man to till the ground (Genesis 2:5). Our Creator never intended human beings to bunch up by the millions, one on top of another – with the minority owning



the land – crammed into over-crowded, crime-infested, polluted cities. This is the reason that in the Kingdom each will have his own land to cultivate and be self-sustaining. The trend of the last two hundred years of industrialization and urban development will be reversed. No longer will

land barons and giant developers prod farmers to sell out to them so they can build factories, shopping centers and mega housing developments. Instead, everyone will live and enjoy having their own “vine and fig tree.”

A Strong Work Ethic

Another godly principle that will be evident in the new world economy is a strong work ethic and return to physical labor. The Apostle Paul wrote that *if any would not work, neither should he eat* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). He also wrote, *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth* (Ephesians 4:28).

Again, there will be a complete reversal of what we observe in this age of leisure and overindulgence in entertainment, welfare programs, labor unions, and a society of “couch potatoes” and laziness. To be sure, many people work hard; but overall, there has been a noticeable decline in the work ethic, especially among younger generations. To ever realize our full potential, God wants us to understand the great meaning and purpose behind productive, efficient labor. Solomon declares that God intended man *to enjoy the good of all his labour* (Ecclesiastes 5:18), which not only would keep him occupied, but in which he would find fulfillment and accomplishment. God wants us to make productive use of what we have

now, to know that we can be entrusted with the true riches of the Kingdom. This was the lesson of Christ's parable of the "unjust steward" in Luke 16:11, *If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon [or money], who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

Sharing and Tithing

In the millennium, the mortals will have temporal needs in addition to the most important need – education in the one true Gospel. Will there not be an equitable and just welfare system based on godly principles, such as those established in Deuteronomy chapters 15 and 26? These laws were instituted so that *there shall be no poor among you (15:4). But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth (vs. 8).* There will be no poverty in the new world economy. The saints will share the abundance of the increase with the mortals that cannot supply their own needs, *When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled (26:12 ESV).*

Surely, God wants us to apply these principles of sharing and tithing now as we prepare for our future, Lord willing, in His eternal family and the "economy" of the restored Kingdom of God upon the earth. Perhaps there is no better exhortation concerning our present attitude toward our "living" in this age and that which will become the foundation of the future economy, than that described of the early believers in Acts 4:32-35 (ESV):

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common... and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Ken Wood, Richmond, VA

FEATURE ARTICLE

"Rebekah (Part 1)" in the March 2021 Advocate introduced us to this faithful woman and the role she played in the plan and purpose of God. The author focused on the character of Rebekah, pointing out facts and considerations that may be overlooked – from the point when Eliezer communed with her at the well, to the birth of Esau and Jacob, for which she had patiently waited some twenty years. We trust that those who

read Part 1 (i.e., *God's Choice; A Separation Real and Irrevocable; A Woman's Prayer*), will be eager to read Part 2 below, which continues with Rebekah's disappointment and grief that Esau had so carelessly parted with his birthright. – Editor

Rebekah (Part 2)

Such Different Sons

Rebekah must have watched her sons grow up with interest and wonder. She would observe Jacob's development particularly, knowing that God had foretold a greater future for her younger son. When Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a mere mess of pottage, Rebekah would have seen in this the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy, *The elder shall serve the younger* (Genesis 25:23). It probably pleased her that by means of this transaction the birthright now belonged legally to Jacob. Yet, as a mother she would grieve that Esau had parted so lightly with the precious birthright: that he had indeed *despised his birthright* (25:34).

Other undesirable features were present too, for the language of Hebrews 12:15-16 is very strong, *Looking diligently...lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* Rebekah would wonder how Isaac could possibly prefer Esau in view of these grave defects in his character, and Isaac's favoritism towards Esau would make her lavish still more affection

on Jacob, the son that God loved. In such matters, we must beware of the influence of popular writers whose opinions rarely have any Scriptural foundation. In his *Women of the Bible*, H. V. Morton wrote of Rebekah, "It seems to us difficult to understand how even an infatuated mother... could prefer the smooth, spoilt Jacob to the honest, hairy Esau." It is not difficult for us to understand why writers prefer the profane Esau, for "the world loves its own."

... some would have us believe that Rebekah's character underwent a sudden change in the matter of her sons' blessings... Let us consider the facts anew and impartially, influenced only by what the Scriptures reveal.

The history of Rebekah's sons is now interrupted to tell of a famine in Canaan. Isaac went to the land of the Philistines and here Rebekah was sorely tried. Isaac adopted the same

expedient as his father in declaring that Rebekah was his sister. This was in spite of God's assurance of protection before he went, *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee* (Genesis 26:3).

In fairness to Isaac and Abraham, it should be mentioned that the word translated "sister" can also mean any female relative (in both cases they had married relatives), but this explanation would not provide much consolation to their wives. The Bible tells us nothing of Rebekah's feelings and we can only imagine her grief when she realized that Isaac valued his life above her honor. God's care went with her however, so that no harm befell her, and the honorable Abimelech rebuked Isaac. Such incidents help us to realize that the patriarchs were but human beings after all.

Further hardships awaited Rebekah when the Philistines expelled Isaac, fearing his increased prosperity. Then in Gerar, the herdsmen took away the wells on which their lives depended. Isaac showed his meekness in yielding to the aggressor. God blessed him finally, so there was no "contention" or "hatred" when the well Rehoboth, meaning "room," was completed. Further, Abimelech, who had previously expelled Isaac, now came to make a treaty with him. There is no mention of Rebekah throughout these trials, but we may be sure she shared them with Isaac.

Heartache

From what we know of Rebekah's character, these material hardships would not oppress her like the heartache of seeing further undesirable traits in Esau's character. Soon she was to know the sorrows of a parent whose son finds a partner in the world. We are not left to wonder how she reacted, for we are told when Esau married two Hittite women it was *a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah* (26:35). Her's had been a prayerful marriage, so we can understand her sorrow when her son chose to marry idolatrous Hittites.

When Rebekah first appeared in the Bible story she was a sweet, unselfish girl. Marriage brought her many trials, and in the school of suffering her character developed. How bravely she bore her troubles. Never did she complain or show impatience at delay.

What of the ethics of Rebekah's action? Was it right to take advantage of Isaac's failing sight in her plan to secure the blessing for Jacob? ...she had waited for years for a change in Isaac's attitude towards his sons... now it was imperative to act.

What a wonderful example! Yet some would have us believe that Rebekah's character underwent a sudden change in the matter of her sons' blessings. Let us consider the facts anew and impartially, influenced only by what the Scriptures reveal!

Isaac was under the impression that death was imminent (though he lived on for over twenty years) and was about to bestow on Esau the chief blessing of the elder son. Such an action appears incomprehensible. Rebekah's feelings must have been in turmoil as she overheard the conversation. Isaac was acting on personal preference; although the profane Esau had surrendered his birthright to Jacob previously and, what is more important, God had declared, *the elder shall serve the younger* (Genesis 25:23).

A Scheme Devised

Was Isaac to be allowed to defy God? Rebekah thought quickly and we know the scheme that she devised. Jacob was at first reluctant to cooperate, but Rebekah assumed full responsibility. She wanted the blessing to go to the man of God's choice. Jacob too wanted above



Govert Flinck, "Isaac Blesses Jacob," c.1638, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

all else the blessing of God, which the wicked have never desired. Though there were moments of doubt, the plan succeeded; Isaac's wrongdoing had been circumvented and Jacob received the blessing God intended him to have. The drama is heightened by the arrival of Esau, full of hopes soon to be shattered. When the truth gradually dawned upon Isaac, did he blame Rebekah and Jacob? No. He "trembled very exceedingly." He had actually told Jacob, believing it was Esau, *Let thy mother's sons bow down to thee* (27:29), thereby attempting to reverse the Divine decree – *The elder shall serve the younger*.

all else the blessing of God, which the wicked have never desired. Though there were moments of doubt, the plan succeeded; Isaac's wrongdoing had been circumvented and Jacob received the blessing God intended him to have.

The drama is heightened by the arrival of

So Isaac did not rebuke Rebekah.

Instead he told Esau that he had unwittingly blessed his younger brother, adding with conviction, *Yea, and he shall be blessed (27:33)*. Esau was then given the secondary blessing. But what of the ethics of Rebekah's action? Was it right to take advantage of Isaac's failing sight in her plan to secure the blessing for Jacob? Most people would condemn her and say that if only she had waited, God would have found some other way of blessing Jacob. Perhaps. But there is no evidence of this and indeed she had waited years for a change in Isaac's attitude towards his sons.

Rebekah felt that now it was imperative to act. Her critics point to the fact that mother and son were afterwards parted forever, that Jacob suffered much at the hands of Laban, and that these sufferings were sent as a punishment for his sin. Is not this begging the question? Suffering is often sent as a punishment, but it has other purposes too. Job's friends used this argument. We also know that the Lord Jesus Christ was made *perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10)*.

Whom God Does Not Condemn

The fact is that God does not condemn Rebekah or Jacob. The Scriptures tell us of many sinful deeds, but the sinners are always condemned by God. We think immediately of Adam, Cain, Aaron, Moses, David and Solomon. When they did wrong, God's disapproval followed. Would it not be wiser to refrain from condemning those whom God does not rebuke? When *Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married (Numbers 12:1)*, they were rebuked with the words *...wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (12:8)*, and severe punishment followed.

It is evident that God's standard of judgement differs from man's. God alone knows the all-important motives behind our actions. Of these motives man knows nothing, so he cannot judge the actions that follow. We might be tempted to condemn Rahab for urging the king's messengers to go and pursue the spies whom she was at that very moment concealing in her own house. A lie, we might say. But what is the Divine verdict? She is included among the faithful in Hebrews 11.

The example of Rahab, praised by God, should make us very cautious about condemning Rebekah whom God does not condemn. The inspired words of Balaam might almost apply here: *How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?*

The commendation of James is even clearer, *Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* (2:25)

The fact that she only wanted to save God's servants is from God's standpoint far more important than that her words were literally untrue. God alone reads the motives. The example of Rahab, praised by God, should make us very cautious about condemning Rebekah whom God does not condemn. The inspired words of Balaam might almost apply here: *How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?* (Numbers 23:8) How indeed?

Returning to Rebekah, we find that her troubles, after securing the blessing for Jacob, were by no means over. The profane Esau now had murder in his heart: murder against his brother. He was only waiting for Isaac's death to take his revenge. So Rebekah cried in anguish, *Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?...* that is, of Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 27:45).

Rebekah did not wish to burden her supposedly dying husband with this new trouble, so instead she deplored Esau's Hittite wives, and added, *If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth...what good shall my life do me?* (27:46) Isaac acted upon the suggestion and sent Jacob away to Padan-aram to find a wife. This sequence of ideas could be missed by the chapter divisions between Genesis 27 and 28. **Before Jacob's departure, Isaac renewed the blessing already given to him: this time in all sincerity** (28:1-5).

Parting

How grieved Rebekah must have been to part thus with her favorite son. Had she known that he would be an exile for over twenty years and that they would never see each other again, it would have been infinitely worse. As it was, she thought he would soon return and told him to *tarry with him* [Laban] *a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away* (27:44).

Since Rebekah was unable to accompany Jacob herself, she did the next best thing by sending with him one whom she could trust and who would always care for Jacob: her old nurse. There is nothing of this in the account of Jacob's departure, but it can be inferred from Genesis 35:8, the chapter that describes Jacob's return after his long sojourn with Laban.

The only other occasion when she [Rebekah's nurse] is mentioned is when she accompanied the girl Rebekah on her journey to marry Isaac. And now, about 117 years later, the aged nurse is again travelling in the same direction, this time with Jacob. It seems probable therefore, that she went with him when he fled from Esau. When he reached Luz (Bethel), we read that *Deborah, Rebekah's*

nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak, and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth (35:8). Jacob's love for this faithful retainer is revealed in the name given to her burial place – *Allon-bachuth* – “the oak of weeping.”

There is no reference to Rebekah after Jacob's departure save that she was buried in the cave of Machpelah. And there she rests till resurrection morn, a worthy example of patience in tribulation.

Sister Margaret Fowler

(from the book Women of the Bible, published by *The Christadelphian*, 1982)

Q & A

Readers are asked to submit questions to be answered as well as comments on previously published answers in this section. Questions and comments may be sent to: Brother Ken Wood at question@christadelphianadvocate.org



Hated by the World

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. (1 John 3:13)

Question: It seems that Christians are being despised and even discriminated against more and more by the “powers that be” and others in the world that do not share their conviction of faith; and extreme evangelicals are only making matters worse. Is it possible that our freedom of worship could be taken from us if time goes on?

Answer: We certainly hope and pray that the freedom of worship that we enjoy will not be taken away or affected in any way. It is also true that it shouldn't be taken for granted and could be viewed as becoming more “fragile” based on recent events and the attitudes of some in our country. As we contemplate this question, we would like to consider how the view of Christians has been affected in the past, and how reverse discrimination is very much at play in our society today.

The Scriptures do make it clear that, as believers, we can expect to face some form of persecution from the world-at-large as the day of our Lord's return draws near. We recall what the Apostle Paul told Timothy, *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come... Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and*

seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:1, 12-13).

Yahweh has declared from the beginning that mutual antagonism can be expected between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). The record of history has demonstrated that this has been the case, with millions of believers in the one true God, both Jew and Gentile, having suffered persecution down through the centuries, even unto death. We know Christ warned the Apostles multiple times that they would experience the world's hatred (John 15:19-20; 16:2, 33; 17:14), as would those in the early ecclesias. The Apostle John thus wrote that believers must "not marvel if the world hates them" (1 John 3:13); in fact, they should expect and prepare themselves for such hatred.

Let's think about the early Christians and the position they were in. The Jewish brethren had to resist the pressure to capitulate to the demands of the Judaizers. The Gentile believers also refused to compromise their loyalty to Christ and were persecuted because they would not submit to the demands of the Roman government, including the worship of Caesar. This refusal to conform caused the members of the early ecclesia to be hated by the world around them. Some were even labeled as insurrectionists.

The other reason for being hated by many of the members of pagan society at the time was the uncomfortable feeling that the presence of the Christians caused. Their strict morality was a constant reproach to the ungodly ways of the world around them. The same is true today. **The basic demand of the Truth was then, and is now, that we must develop the courage to remain separate from the world and refuse to conform.** Indeed, we must be constantly on guard as Paul warned, *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse* (2 Timothy 3:13).

We also agree with the questioner that some Christians and their extreme views and violent actions are only making it worse for those whose only desire is to follow the humble and meek example of Christ and the advice he gave to his disciples: to *be wise as serpents and harmless as doves* (Matthew 10:16). None of us, for example, would ever think of participating in protests; but, we are all aware of how some who claim to be Christians have been at the forefront of some of the recent protests, even the one on January 6th in Washington, DC that culminated in the assault of the US Capitol.

One of the co-authors of the book, "Taking America Back for God," was asked about the role of the religious right in the January 6th march in Washington and the assault on the Capitol. His response was: "The Capitol insurrection was as Christian nationalist as it gets. The best evidence would be the use of sacred symbols during the insurrection such as the cross, Christian flag, 'Jesus saves' sign, etc. But also, the language of the prayers

offered by the insurrectionists both outside and inside the Capitol indicates the views of those who obviously thought Jesus not only wanted them to violently storm the Capitol in order to take it back from the socialists, globalists, etc., but also believed that God empowered their efforts, giving them victory.” (Samuel L. Perry, Professor of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma)

Such violent acts are nothing new in the history of man. Many have taken up arms and shed innocent blood in the name of God and His righteous Son throughout the ages. We recall the Crusaders, for example, who fought against the Muslims in the 12th and 13th centuries. Countless thousands were slaughtered by these “Christian” soldiers as they overtook the Muslims and occupied their cities, including Jerusalem. **The point is that the actions of one faction can taint the whole, much larger group – in this case the entire Christian religion.**

It is sad but true that religion has often been directly linked to the worst examples of human behavior. Some say that more wars have been waged, more people killed, and in these days more evil perpetuated in the name of religion than any other institutional force in world history. We know that has been the case with Muslim extremists and terrorists such as ISIS and the many other Islamic jihadists’ groups. As evidenced by recent protests and violence in the streets of cities too close to home for many of us, Christians have exhibited behavior that is also fueled by their claimed loyalty to their God and their right to fight for what they believe in.

Unfortunately, these “extremists” and their violent actions, often motivated by hatred for those who do not hold their same views, have had a negative effect on even moderate Christians. We, as Christadelphians, who some might label as “fundamentalists,” can get painted with the same brush (and most unfortunately, we have also been labeled as a “cult” as observed by anyone googling Christadelphians as a denomination).

As fewer and fewer in the country identify themselves as practicing Christians, and as our society becomes more and more secular and politicized, we can only see the trend of public acceptance and tolerance of our strongly held beliefs becoming less and less. Sadly, such trends and political pressure could eventually constrain our ability to worship and speak freely in a public forum about what we hold dear. The warning to us should be clear and bring to mind Proverbs 22:3, *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.*

We are not saying that we should discontinue professing our faith to others; for surely, we must *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear* (1 Peter 3:15). **The clear message though is this: we must be prudent and**

vigilant in how we present ourselves to unbelievers, particularly knowing that there are those who are looking to incriminate anyone who does not hold views similar to their own. This cannot be truer in this age of technology and the internet. Let us then be particularly wary about what we say and what we post on social media that could be interpreted the wrong way and held against us!

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil... And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3, 5).

Ken Wood

APOLOGETICS

Gravity and Evolution

If Evolution is Only a Theory, Why is it Taught as a Fact?

Occasionally, those who disagree with evolution will ask, “If evolution is only a theory, why is it taught as a fact?” A common response from proponents of evolution is, “Gravity is only a theory and we teach that as fact.” As one evolution proponent elaborated:

JayC Since so many believers don't seem to know this, there are TWO parts to evolutionary science.

1. The FACT that evolution has occurred, does occur, and will occur.
2. The THEORY of the mechanisms behind the FACT.

Ditto for gravity. Read up on gravitational THEORY. When you drop an object, do you not see that it falls? Do you call gravity ONLY a THEORY?

In science, to qualify as a THEORY requires tremendous amounts of evidence. A THEORY is just one step below LAW. THEORY does not mean any half-sized notion.

Creationism and gods are not THEORIES. They are unsupported hypotheses.

Essentially, the evolution proponent's argument is this: “We see things pulled toward the ground every day, and therefore the theory of gravity is

an established fact. In like manner, the theory of the evolution of species should be given the same leeway as the theory of gravity by anyone who agrees that gravity exists!”

The Problem

How should we respond to such arguments? The response to the comparing of the Theory of Gravity to the Theory of Evolution is riddled with issues such as:

1. Not All Theories Have Been Proven: First, there is a conceptual problem. The definition of a theory is:

- an idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain facts or events
- an idea that is suggested or presented as possibly true but that is not known or proven to be true
- the general principles or ideas that relate to a particular subject

(From the Merriam Webster Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theory>; you can also read the same concepts expressed at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory>)

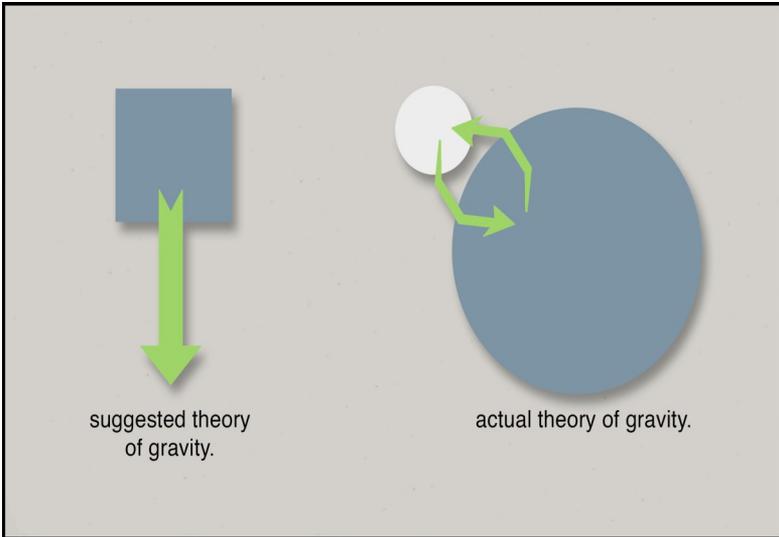
As Wikipedia points out, **scientific theories are more than just educated guesses; they are constructed in such a way that they can be verified (or not):**

“In modern science, the term ‘theory’ refers to scientific theories, a well-confirmed type of explanation of nature, made in a way consistent with scientific method, and fulfilling the criteria required by modern science. Such theories are described in such a way that any scientist in the field is in a position to understand and either provide empirical support (‘verify’) or empirically contradict (‘falsify’) it. Scientific theories are the most reliable, rigorous, and comprehensive form of scientific knowledge, in contrast to more common uses of the word ‘theory’ that imply that something is unproven or speculative, which is better characterized by the word ‘hypothesis.’ Scientific theories are distinguished from hypotheses, which are individual empirically testable conjectures, and scientific laws, which are descriptive accounts of how nature will behave under certain conditions.”

Theories may be called “The Theory of [X],” but that naming convention does not affirm or deny the verity of its claims. Claiming that one theory has been verified does not mean that another to which it has been compared can share in its truth.

2. The Answer Is Not Scientific: Most people assume that the (colloquially-named) “theory of gravity” states that gravity pulls things down to the Earth. This is incorrect. The Theory is actually about how and why bodies

attract one another. It is only a consequence of gravity that something falls down to the earth when it is dropped.



It is not apparent how and why disparate bodies attract, especially outside of Newtonian Physics (and Relativity). In the physics of quantum mechanics (which deals with subatomic particles), gravity becomes “an area of active research” because the rules that apply to larger masses in the universe either seem to cease to apply or take on radically different meanings at the subatomic level.

Put simply, “theory” is a great word to describe gravity. Science describes some of the fundamentals of gravity fairly well; other aspects (such as the universal gravitational constant known as “Big G”) are unknown mathematically, and still others are currently outside the reach of feasible testing because of technological limitations (see: “graviton particles”).

3. The Theory of Evolution is Not a Monolith: Is evolution an observable fact? Like gravity, evolution is a word that can mean different things in different contexts. At its core, evolution is something with which most people would agree: that the inherited traits of lifeforms change over successive generations.

On one level, this is plainly observable in humans, animals, and plants all around us. We do see changes in appearance and/or behavior in animals and plants over time. The incremental, observable changes we see within a certain type of plant or creature are sometimes referred to as “micro-evolution” because they represent “variance,” not sweeping change in an organism.

Evolutionary skeptics generally don't dispute the minor genetic variation within species, but rather the extrapolation from that empirically observed data into the unobserved realm of the macro cross evolution of species. Quite apart from any religious claims, there are significant scientific questions about Darwinism's models that have yet to be addressed by the scientific community. There are conceptual questions about if or how the theory of evolution could ever predict or explain the arrival of new biological mechanisms for survival (past or present). There are serious questions about how the formation of DNA randomly occurred, both individually and in tandem with a subcellular machine which can "unzip," read, and manufacture reproductions of that code (see Stephen C. Meyer's Signature in the Cell). There are questions about the mathematical probabilities of the random existence of life and intelligence; there are questions about the calculus used in recent computer modeling currently touted by evolutionary biologists, and there are questions about the evolutionary timeline and whether the fossil record confirms or denies this timeline (See David Berlinski's The Deniable Darwin & Other Essays for an in-depth look).

These are only a few of the questions evolutionary skeptics might raise! Ultimately, our question is this: while scientists share their findings, are they honestly abiding by their own standards of proof? Such a question is NOT "science denial," or "anti-science." It is a call for clarification on what appears to be a conflict from the experts.

4. The Answer Doesn't Address the Subtext:

When someone asks – "If evolution is only a theory, why is it taught as a fact?" – they are expressing a concern that someone has claimed that there is no room for doubt on an unverified premise or framework of ideas. That this perception even exists should be of some concern to the opposition! **The "gravity" response addresses none of it. The analogy of the theories only serves as an attempt to shame honest inquiry.**

Our Conclusion

The "Theory of Gravity" retort from Darwinists is not only scientifically backwards, it does not really answer any part of the original question. Bafflingly, those who use this response seem to want the world to be more appreciative of scientific literacy, while actively cutting against any work toward those ends. In the end, if evolutionists want to change the minds of skeptics and Bible believers, they will need both better introspection and a better argument.

Andrew Johnson, Roselle, IL

FROM OUR PAST

Do We Understand?

Do we understand the present-day conditions and surroundings of true servants of Christ? It is my belief, derived from the Scriptures, that our God with whom we have made a covenant, desires results. He expects us to know how to get results, and if we do not, our unfitness to be included in His Kingdom of rulers will be proven thereby. He explains to us that in order to possess any value with Him, we must bear the “fruit of the spirit” and be spiritually minded. He gives us the necessary instructions to go by, and if we do not measure up to the requirements, He loses nothing; we ourselves are the ones who suffer. Nevertheless, the Lord is interested in man. This He has plainly shown in John 3:16, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

He desires that we should obtain results, because they will enable us to say, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* (1 Corinthians 15:55) He has also declared Himself

to be long-suffering, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, but at the final hearing we must have something to exhibit to our credit in righteousness. In fact, because of pride and an inborn desire for certain vain and unprofitable things, it is practically impossible for man to attain to any degree of righteousness in the sight of God without first passing through a period of trouble and sorrow (not because of any benefit which God would derive, but in order that man himself might be seasoned, made more sober, and better at heart). One of experience said, *Sorrow is better than laughter:*

for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better (Ecclesiastes 7:3).

A glance at past history will show that many were given the chance to suffer [correction] in the service of God. We are told, *Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried* (Daniel 12:10). Saul of Tarsus breathed out threats and slaughter against certain of them and did not hesitate to lock them behind prison bars, both men and women. It is written, *Ye have*

...it is practically impossible for man to attain to any degree of righteousness in the sight of God without first passing through a period of trouble and sorrow... in order that man himself might be seasoned, made more sober, and better at heart.

condemned and killed the just and he doth not resist you (James 5:6). They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins... and in dens and caves of the earth... and these all, having obtained a good report through faith... (Hebrews 11:37-39). It is not necessary for sorrow and trial to last always, only until it has accomplished the desired result. Our loving and all-wise Father knows the needs of a child better than does the child. Some children are quicker to understand and more ready to obey than others. What a vast difference between the foolish and the wise...

Jesus, in the parable of the sower (Mark 4), spoke of the deceitfulness of riches. We also can have possessions in the world which we look on as being necessary and valuable, but these things often make us unfruitful in the service of the Lord. When we recognize this and feel that we are not gaining spiritual strength, but rather drifting back toward the world, it would be wisdom on our part to rightly use the knowledge once learned, and remove that which hinders us; nevertheless, we will do no more than is our duty, and the weight taken from our conscience alone will repay us.

We who seek immortality and rulership with the Son of God in the glorious future seek a great thing. They, whom the Lord intends to raise higher than their fellows, must first expect to be more humble than others. If the poor brother be sincerely striving in the Lord's service, he is unreservedly entitled to our fellowship in Christ, especially since the poor of this world are usually the kind that are rich toward God. We who have such great hope in the future should understand this and content ourselves with a "temperate allowance" in this present evil world. Let us trust that our God will soon arise and have mercy on Zion, and bring to the world one faith, one language, and one law.

*C. Wade, August 1919 Christadelphian Advocate and
Fellow-Labourer, pp. 236-238*

EXPOSITION

"...In The Day..."

(Within 24 hours or within 1,000 years?)

*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:16-17). **The Edenic Law contained a prohibition (shalt not eat), a punishment (shalt surely die), and a timeframe for delivering the punishment (in the day).** Of these components, the*

This article will focus on the interpretation of ...in the day... : exploring the two primary interpretations appearing in Christadelphian published works.

interpretation of the timeframe and the punishment have been the most controversial or diverging. This article will focus on the interpretation of the timeframe, ...*in the day*...: exploring the two primary interpretations appearing in Christadelphian published works. Because the timeframe and the punishment are tightly connected, this analysis will necessarily touch on both topics. **These interpretations can be labeled simply as: “literal day” and “metaphorical day.”** The following will review evidence for each interpretation, compare that evidence, and discuss the implications of each for our understanding of the punishment incurred in Eden and the nature of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

Metaphorical Day Interpretation

The metaphorical day interpretation considers the phrase *in the day* to be representative of a 1,000-year period. The evidence presented for this interpretation is four-fold:

1. The marginal reference in the KJV for the phrase *thou shalt surely die* (Genesis 2:17) has the alternative rendering of *dying thou shalt die*. Many able Bible expositors have concluded this language is indicative of a process of death. That is, not immediate death, but a drawn-out process of mortality, which requires a longer period of time than a literal 24-hour period.
2. On the basis of 2 Peter 3:8, a day can be interpreted to be a long time period in the Scriptures, ...*beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*. This harmonizes with Adam’s eventual death at the age of 930 (Genesis 5:5); so Adam dies within his metaphorical one day in that he does not live past 1,000 years of age.
3. Considering *in the day* to be 1,000 years avoids any potential conflicts with verses addressing the impossibility of God to lie, such as Numbers 23:19, Hebrews 6:18, or Titus 1:2. God told Adam he would die in the day that he transgressed the Law, and God, who cannot lie, kept His word, because Adam eventually died within the 1,000 years (at 930 years of age).
4. Less evidence, but a correlated effect, is the assumed advantage offered the 1,000-year period to the entire account of creation. If days within the first three chapters of Genesis were actually 1,000 years each, then the world is older, and the increased age comes more in line with current

scientific theories of the age of the Earth (though “the evening and the morning” addressing the individual days of creation would therefore also need an alternative interpretation).

As a disclaimer, not everyone may endorse all of these ideas as supportive evidence for the metaphorical day interpretation. Some individuals’ conviction may rest on point number one alone, while dismissing the remaining points. However, all of these ideas are related in a broad sense, in that the timeframe is expanded, allowing for the process of death over time.

Literal Day Interpretation

The literal day interpretation takes the phrase *...in the day...* at its most basic or usual sense: a 24-hour period. The evidence presented for this interpretation is:

1. The phrase *thou shalt surely die* denotes immediacy, not a process.
2. A literal 24-hour period of time is described within the Genesis 1 creation account as *the evening and the morning*, consistent with Adam’s life experience.

Comparison of the Evidence

Fortunately, these interpretations can be put to a Scriptural test. First, the metaphorical and the literal interpretations both cite the phrase *thou shalt surely die* as supportive evidence, meaning a process of dying or an immediate death respectively. Based on other Scripture, using that exact phrasing, the correct meaning is that of immediate death. The best example is the agreement that Solomon makes with Shimei to remain in Jerusalem; leaving Jerusalem meant that *thou shalt surely die* (1 Kings 2:37-46). Shimei was not threatened with a process of death over a period of time, but an immediate death (which occurred). A similar example occurs with Samson’s parents after being visited by the angel. When Manoah states, *We shall surely die* (Judges 13:22), he did not mean he and his wife were now going to be subject to slow process of death. Such an interpretation would make no sense in its context. He was clearly fearful of an immediate death. In fact, in the next verse, his wife assures him that the announcement from the angel posed no threat to their immediate existence. She very logically states: *If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these* (Judges 13:23). Reflecting on the immediacy of this phrase, Strong’s Concordance adds “very suddenly” as a translation of the phrase *shalt surely die*, and the Jewish Study Bible translates Genesis 2:17, *...as soon as you eat of it, you shall die*. In sum, the idea that the threatened punishment for transgressing the Edenic Law was to occur over a long period of time is not permissible on grammatical grounds, providing strong

support for the literal interpretation and contrary evidence to the metaphorical interpretation.

Second, *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4) is a true Scriptural principle. While on the surface it seems supportive of the metaphorical day interpretation, the application of that principle to Genesis 2:17 is suspect. Examining this phrase within its context illustrates that the phrase does not have to do with the human lifespan. For example, Peter (2 Peter 3:8-11) uses the “1,000 years for a day” principle to argue that mankind is short-sighted and impatient when it comes to the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophesied return. Man’s concept of time in relationship to prophecy is very short, but God has far-reaching plans. In Psalm 90:4, the phrase *a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday* is used to illustrate the eternity of God as directly contrasted with the human lifespan, which is described later in the psalm as *the days of our years are threescore years and ten* (90:10). Neither of the aforementioned passages attempts to describe a human’s day as equivalent to 1,000 years. In addition, it is notable that the believers found worthy to enter the Kingdom *lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years* (Revelation 20:4) and not a “day.” This is an important contrasting Scripture that is a significant challenge to the metaphorical interpretation. In Revelation, when presenting the promised outcome of a human’s time and life, i.e. the 1,000 years for the worthy, the Scriptures do not use the term “day.” In fact, it is very explicit that it is “a thousand years.” The support for the metaphorical interpretation is limited given that it is based upon an interpretation of Genesis 2:17 alone, which would constitute it unique within the whole Bible.

If applying the 1,000 years of 2 Peter is suspect, is the application of a literal 24-hour reading of the timeframe “in the day” justifiable? Yes, the duration of a day had already been defined in Genesis prior to the creation of Adam. Genesis 1:5 reads: *And the evening and the morning were the first day.* The formula that *evening and morning* is a day is repeated throughout the creation account, establishing a day as an evening and a morning, or 24 hours. Additionally, there is no internal evidence or hint that *in the day* should be read any differently than the first usages of the word “day” in Genesis. Moreover, on what authority should we reference “*in the day*” other than literally?

Third, does the literal interpretation somehow charge God with issuing a false statement when He decreed *in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, because Adam and Eve did not die the day they ate of the tree? Stated otherwise: does God not end up keeping His word unless a day is interpreted to be equivalent to 1,000 years? The fact that God cannot lie is a Scriptural principle. Nevertheless, it would be patently incorrect to state that failure to carry out a pronounced punishment reflects negatively on our

Heavenly Father, or that He has not been forthright in His dealings with man in such instances. We have numerous examples of God pronouncing future death and punishment on individuals and entire peoples: yet He ultimately stays His hand (e.g. Exodus 32:9-10, 14; 2 Kings 20:1, 4-5).

The most notable example is likely the case of Nineveh, where the pronouncement was, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown* (Jonah 3:4). However, Jonah's complaint was that he fully expected God not to carry out the prophesied punishment, *And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country?*

Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil (Jonah 4:1-2). This passage is particularly instructive as Jonah does not charge God with a failure to keep His word in the case of Nineveh. Instead, in an allusion to Exodus 34:5-7, Jonah's contention is with God's mercy. God's mercy will be discussed again; but at a minimum, it is impermissible to treat Genesis 2:17 differently than the aforementioned examples by requiring the metaphorical interpretation of a day in an attempt to sidestep any potential falsehoods on God's part.

This last point of interpreting creation days to be of a longer duration than 24 hours, I might suggest, is really reflective of a desire to be congruent with modern science. Problematically, even if you applied a 1,000 years for each day of creation, the resulting timeframe would only be an additional 6,000 years. Genesis and the theory of evolution differ by about a factor of 100 million, so a few extra 1,000 years would make no significant difference.

Implications

The interpretation of ...in the day... is consequential both for the events in the Garden of Eden and for the plan of salvation. First, the metaphorical interpretation would seem to leave no room for the intervention of God's mercy. God is *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin* (Exodus 34:6-7). If Adam and Eve's punishment was an eventual slow mortality over a period of up to 1,000 years, then Adam and Eve received exactly what they deserved. There

...the metaphorical interpretation would seem to leave no room for the intervention of God's mercy... In contrast, for the literal interpretation of immediate death on the day of transgression, the pronouncement is a supreme act of mercy.

is no mercy from God in this scenario.

In contrast, the literal interpretation of immediate death on the day of transgression, *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return* (Genesis 3:19) is a supreme act of mercy. As in other instances of Divine punishment, God allows His creation the time to follow His paths.

Second, both the literal and metaphorical interpretations agree that the outcome of the events of Genesis 3 was that sinful creatures would be cast out from the presence of God, and destined to eventually die. Problematically, the metaphorical view does not explain the reason for, or the importance of, the sacrifice of Genesis 3:21 as part of those events. In fact, the interpretation regarding the punishment being death at some point in the next 1,000 years, i.e. mortality, would seem to rob the sacrifice as a means of justification. Regardless of which interpretation is taken, the sacrifice in the Garden of Eden did nothing to avert the punishment of the process of mortality. If the sacrifice did nothing to avert mortality, what was the purpose? The metaphorical interpretation does not have a strong answer. Of course, this limitation of the metaphorical day interpretation cascades to the sacrifice of Christ, as he was the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Revelation 13:8). By extension, the metaphorical day interpretation cannot draw a strong conclusion about the relationship of the sacrifice of Christ to the events of the Garden of Eden.

In contrast, the literal day interpretation has a strong causal link between the events at Eden and Christ's death. In the case of death as the penalty in the day that sin occurred, the Edenic sacrifice coupled with belief in the promises of God was the means to Adam and Eve's justification. That justification was only a type, however, *for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins* (Hebrews 10:4). Justification for the human race from the penalty of death to which all men became subject required the greater sacrifice of Christ (Romans 5:10).

Conclusion

In summary, the metaphorical interpretation does not follow the grammar of the Old Testament. It requires a completely unique one-time reading of Scripture; and applies standards not consistent with comparable events. In contrast, the literal day interpretation conforms to Old Testament grammar and is consistent with prior passages and other events. In the absence of any supporting evidence, and only contradictory evidence, the metaphorical day

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interpretation is an example of reading a passage with a presumed conclusion in mind first, and then attempting to find justification for that conclusion. That is a problematic way to approach Scripture.

Josh Vest, Carmel, IN

Bulletin Board

UNDELIVERED ADVOCATES: The *Advocate* has received reports from multiple US subscribers who had not received their December, January, and/or February *Advocates* in the mail. These reports have come from various states across the country. We are replacing these undelivered *Advocates* as they come to our attention, and are alerting subscribers to inform us when they fail to receive their *Advocate(s)* within a reasonable time-frame.

Advocates mailed to US subscribers are sent through bulk mail originating from Richmond, VA. Coincidentally, according to a CBS report on December 23, 2020, the U.S. Postal Service, responding to Richmond, VA citizens' complaints/problems with mail delivery during and since the holidays, were told their local post offices were not receiving mail from the Richmond Processing and Distribution Center located in Sandston. In a statement to CBS 6, a USPS spokesperson confirmed the delivery delays and issues due to the overwhelming and historic mail volume this holiday season and a temporary employee shortage due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We might assume that the Richmond Processing and Distribution Center's difficulties not only affected local delivery, but also nationwide mail originating from or passing through Richmond (as *Advocate* subscribers from various states have reported).

If you do not receive your monthly *Advocate* within a reasonable time frame, please contact the Treasurer – Brother Casey King at kerrydouglas42@gmail.com and a replacement copy will be provided. Also, be aware that digital copies of all *Advocates* beginning in January 2020 are posted and freely available from the website – www.christadelphianadvocate.org – in the “RESOURCES” section.

ECCLESIAL NEWS

FINGER LAKES, NY – The Finger Lakes Ecclesia, Lord willing, will be hosting a virtual Fraternal Gathering Friday April 30th through Sunday May 2, 2021 on the theme “Vision of the Kingdom.” Our speakers for the weekend will be Brother David Barnes, Brother Jason Bland, and Brother Jonathan Farrar. We also plan on having classes for youth and teens during this weekend. All classes and the Memorial Service will be available via Zoom.

Jason VanHorn

DEFINING FANATICISM

*Selection from the Book Review – The Confused World of Modern Atheism
published in the August 2017 Christadelphian Advocate*

At the beginning of the book, the author sets out a series of “ground rules” as guidelines for discussing the existence of God. The second “Ground Rule” is “Defining Fanaticism.” The reason that this rule is necessary is that non-believers will often dismiss those who they believe are “religious fanatics,” and therefore it is necessary to understand what fanaticism is. The author writes:

What distinguishes the passionate believer in a cause or ideology from the fanatic is not what he believes, but whether or not he is open to questions, to consider another point of view, or to be theoretically ready to reconsider his position. The fanatic “discusses” or “argues” only to justify his beliefs and agenda, but never to discover the truth. In short, fanaticism is not a function of *what* one believes; it is a function of how – on an internal level – one emotionally and intellectually *relates* to those beliefs. The fanatic is someone who has *shut off his or her mind* and is unwilling to consider anything that presents a challenge to his dearly held belief system.

Using this definition of fanaticism, the author concludes, “there is no ideology that is free from fanatics.” The author proposes one test for determining whether any given individual is a fanatic – “someone who has shut off their own mind as to be so blind as to deny the possibility of fanaticism in his own particular ideological community.” This test applies not only to religious believers but also to “freethinkers, homosexual activists, global warming activists, pro-abortion activists, scientists, conservatives, liberals, socialists, capitalists and atheists, to name a few.”

This definition of fanaticism is an important one for us to keep in mind. When a young person in high school or college asks genuine questions about the Christadelphian belief system, it is important to engage those questions in an honest and earnest way. That is the tone in which this book is written and it serves as an excellent model for us to use.

The author has excellent insights into the relationship between morality and belief in God, and whether morality is even possible in a universe that was strictly the product of chemical and physical forces.

Nonsense of a High Order: The Confused World of Modern Atheism,
Rabbi Moshe Averick, Mosaica Press, 287 pages, published in 2016