

Psalm 8

The record of David and Goliath is redolent with types of the victory of Christ over sin, the saints over flesh, life over death. The remarkable placement of the skull in Jerusalem links it with similar records in Genesis 22 and the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 8 encapsulates these types, and Psalm 144 likewise relates to this episode.

The title of Psalm 8, "upon Muth-labben" (found at the beginning of Psalm 9), means, 'for the death of the champion'.² Several verses in Psalm 8 reveal links to 1 Samuel 17. Verse 2 celebrates the triumph of youth over its enemy, just as the stripling David overcame Goliath. But, as verse 2 also says, it was God's victory, not David's; Goliath was literally 'stilled' by God. Psalm 8:6 is also significant. In purely natural terms the Philistine should have had dominion over David, but it was not to be, because God "madest him [David] to have dominion", and of course Goliath ended up literally under David's feet (1 Sam. 17:51).

Verse 7 goes on to take up language that was used in 1 Samuel 17. David did not simply triumph, he "had dominion over . . . the beasts of

the field". This is surely an echo of David's claim that he had defeated a lion and a bear, and this Philistine, whom he likened to a wild animal, would suffer a similar fate (vv. 34-37). In verse 8 the parallel with 1 Samuel 17 continues. The dominion of which the psalmist speaks is not restricted to beasts of the field. It also extended to the fish of the sea. In 1 Samuel 17:5 Goliath is depicted as wearing armour comprised of scales of metal. He was imitating the Philistine god Dagon, half-man and half-fish, but he fell before the representative of the living God.

Psalm 8 is a wonderful paean to God's plan of redemption, to the power of the living God to deliver those who trust in Him. Having considered the parable of God's redemptive plan revealed in 1 Samuel 17, we can sing with the psalmist: "what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (v. 4).

(Concluded)

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2. J. W. Thirtle outlines the links between 1 Samuel 17 and Psalm 8 in *The Titles of the Psalms*, pp. 70-75, Henry Frowde, London, 1905.



Principles, Preaching and Problems

EDITOR: Trevor Maher, 5 Birch Court, Doune,
Perthshire, FK16 6JD. Tel. 01786 841830;
e-mail: TAMaher@msn.com

Should Christadelphians invest in stocks and shares?

Russell Ebbs

THIS MIGHT SEEM a strange, almost irrelevant, question for many brethren and sisters, who may have difficulty in making ends meet financially. Yet perhaps for some brethren and sisters, either due to their prosperity, or occasionally other circumstances, the question of investing in stocks and shares does arise. This article sets out to show that Christadelphians should not invest in stocks and shares because this involves being joined together with unbelievers and being partakers of unjust gains.

The camel and the rich man

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mt. 19:24). These words of the Lord Jesus Christ are true, for a rich man is in serious danger of putting his trust in uncertain riches rather than in the Lord. As it is written in another place: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit"; but, interestingly, the preceding verse states by way of contrast: "The name of the LORD

[Yahweh] is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:11,10).

Thus we must seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness before all else, because "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9,10).

Further, it is possible for a rich Christadelphian to think in worldly terms, though perhaps only subconsciously, regarding his wealth as indicative of his success in life, rather than being a trial from God. Therefore he may think disparagingly of other brothers and sisters; his wealth becomes "an high wall in his own conceit". The apostle says further on: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they *be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches*, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (vv. 17-19).

Moth and rust doth corrupt

It is a valuable financial warning that Jesus sounds when he says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Mt. 6:19). Any reader of the financial press will know something of the frauds that have taken place over the years, such as the late Robert Maxwell being accused of stealing the Mirror Group pension funds, the collapse of Barings Bank following the activity of an overseas-based dealer, or indeed the recent 'dot.com' share market collapse.

Jesus continues: "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (vv. 20,21). Indeed, we cannot serve two masters—even the children of this world who desire wealth or power know that. Worldly, ambitious persons can be absolutely single-minded and determined in seeking their goal, letting nothing stand in their way. In a sense, we, as the children of light, can learn from such dedication, as we need to be equally single-minded and determined in pursuit of

righteousness and godliness (Lk. 16:8). The Apostle Paul, after exhorting us to avoid desiring riches in the words quoted above, says: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11).

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt. 6:11), it is possible that his words refer back to Proverbs 30:8,9: "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the LORD [Yahweh]? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain". Or, as this could be expressed: "lead us not into temptation" (Mt. 6:13).

However, it does happen that brethren and sisters sometimes become wealthy; perhaps they have a particular ability which brings financial rewards, or perhaps they benefit from an inheritance, or there could be many other reasons. (We would hope that such wealth was not accumulated through winning a national lottery prize.¹) In a real sense, such circumstances are a trial of faith, since the words of the Master clearly state: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:33; cf. Mt. 19:21).

It is unwise, however, to pass judgement on an apparently wealthy brother or sister. There may be some reason why they are unable to give away their riches—perhaps they have a disabled child or an elderly relative for whom they must provide (1 Tim. 5:8). If, however, a brother or sister appears to be acting like the man in the parable of Luke 12:16-21, pulling down their barns, as it were, and building greater, taking their ease, eating, drinking and being merry, whilst neglecting the Master's vineyard, then this is a cause for concern. Ecclesial elders might wish to give such a matter some prayerful and serious attention (1 Cor. 5:11).

Given the fact that a brother or sister has acquired substantial wealth and cannot, for whatever reason, give it to the work of the Truth, then is it right for funds to be invested in stocks and shares, or, as they are sometimes called, equi-

1. Regarding lottery tickets, see "It could be you", Trevor Maher, *The Testimony*, December 1996, p. 457. The article contends against brethren and sisters buying them, since they are a form of gambling, sanitised by being available in newsagents etc. instead of at disreputable establishments.

ties? A worldly financial advisor, who is not interested in the Christadelphian position, will point out that equities have increased in value at a far greater rate than money left in a building society or bank, and will emphasise that, in order to keep ahead of inflation and to preserve and increase value, there are few alternatives to equity investments.

Although this advice has proven true over the past fifty years, it does make the error of assuming that “all things continue as they were from the beginning” (2 Pet. 3:4). We know, however, that Christ is coming, and that the present civilisation, with its iron, clay, brass, silver and gold, will be broken in pieces and become like chaff (Dan. 2:35). In that day, stocks and shares will not have been a good investment.

Not joined together with unbelievers

In answering the question of whether it is right for a Christadelphian to hold stocks and shares, there are two key issues. The first comes from 2 Corinthians 6:14-18:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”.

A company with shares (the term ‘joint stock company’ used to be more prevalent) is owned jointly by the shareholders. A Christadelphian who owns shares in a company is a part owner of that company with all the other shareholders. Such is, in the apostle’s inspired words, being “unequally yoked together with unbelievers”. Even as we understand that a believer of the Truth cannot marry, or be in business partnership with, an unbeliever, so we should not become a part owner of a worldly company.

This leads to an associated second issue. In a company with shares, the directors and general managers are responsible to the shareholders for generating profit, or creating ‘shareholder value’,

as it is rather euphemistically called. This pursuit of wealth is limited by the law of the land and by the exigencies of operating the business. For example, a company may need to consider the welfare of its staff, in accordance with employment legislation and with market conditions; if certain employee skills are much in demand this will affect the treatment of those staff by the company.

However, the profit motive is all-important, and if that means that the company can get away with overloading staff with work, then it will do so—even if that means that there is a serious impact on the physical and mental health of personnel. These principles also hold true with regard to production and marketing, as, for example, is evident in the production and marketing of tobacco products. In a word, the devil of profit motive reigns supreme in the kingdom of Satan, and the welfare of employee and consumer is only considered insofar as it affects profitability.

A Christadelphian who is a part-owner of such companies is therefore associated with these carnal principles, and is being rewarded financially with dividends and perhaps with capital growth of his or her investment. Whilst the writer has made certain generalisations in the previous paragraph, yet it is true that the law of Christ does not apply in the world’s company boardrooms, and Paul wrote: “be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing”.

This aspect of separation in a commercial sense was also emphasised by Isaiah, when he exhorted the faithful remnant to a godly fear:

“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; *he that despiseth the gain of oppressions*, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes . . . bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off” (Isa. 33:14-17).

The phrase “gain of oppressions” would appear to be an appropriate description of much of the policy devised in the boardrooms of companies in which the share-buying public is invited to invest.

As it was in the days of Lot

The Lord Jesus Christ describes the generation that sees his return as being similar to that of

Lot's days. It is noteworthy that he does not mention the homosexuality or the violence of Lot's day, because these are not major influences on ecclesial conduct, but he does refer to those things which can occupy the minds of disciples to the exclusion of the Truth's priorities: "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, *they bought, they sold*, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Lk. 17:28-30). 'Buying' and 'selling' are here listed; and, with a much larger proportion of people in the Western world now involved in buying and selling shares, we are warned not to become swept along in the current of popular activities.

Further, and again this is an important point, a Christadelphian's citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20, RV), and as such we must ensure that we are always in a position where we can exercise freedom of conscience in our actions (Jas. 5:12). A Christadelphian who invests in stocks and shares has a responsibility for the actions of the company and accepts a financial reward, but has no control over those actions. To say that one chooses not to exercise one's right to vote at shareholders' meetings, whilst accepting the rewards of the investment, does not seem to be a very sound defence.

Bank accounts and other issues

The two key principles from Scripture that the writer has advanced thus far are that we must not be joined together with unbelievers, and that we should not be partakers of the spoil of worldly companies. Keeping these points in mind, how should we regard keeping money in a bank account? In Matthew 25:27 Jesus criticises the slothful servant for not investing his Lord's money with bankers (RV) to gain interest, but the force of the point being made is primarily that we should invest our resources, particularly our effort and energy, in the ecclesia in order to bear fruit in the Lord's service. However, applying the key principles, we note that, in having a bank account, there is no joint ownership involved, but a payment of bank charges for a service offered by the bank.

It could be argued that the bank is using the money we deposited there for purposes of which we might not approve in Scriptural terms, and this is a reasonable point to make. However,

Israel, whilst being prohibited under the Law of Moses from charging interest to their brethren, were permitted to charge interest to strangers:

"Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD [Yahweh] thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it" (Deut. 23:19,20).

This is an indication that the use of a bank to avail ourselves of its services is acceptable in the light of Scripture, and that we need not unduly concern ourselves as to how the 'stranger' uses the funds deposited. There is a measure of similarity to paying tax to the government, which we are commanded to do (Rom. 13:7); these funds also may be used in ways of which we do not approve. It is the writer's view that contributions to a pension fund fall into the same category of paying for a service from a pension provider. It is true that these funds are invested mainly in the equity market, but the contributor usually has no responsibility for the investment of those funds.

Investing in unit trusts and investment bonds is rather different, since, although the investor has virtually no direct influence over management of the funds, he or she has made the decision to invest in stocks and shares, and to pass over the management thereof to professionals. In short, investing in the latter is a way of seeking to profit from the stock market, but, as far as this writer is concerned, abrogating responsibility on how those funds are used.

Is investing in stocks and shares a form of gambling? The present writer thinks not. The former is a speculative investment, but historically it has almost always been possible to sell share holdings, whether at a gain or a loss. The latter is a game ('gamble' is cognate with the word 'game') in which the player bets money on a matter of chance in order to win a prize.

A matter of conscience

The Brotherhood is not a cult, in which a central authority issues proscriptive directives to its adherents. Ours is a harder way, in which we individually seek daily by the reading of the Word to be renewed in knowledge after the image of Him That created us. This development of character involves an enlightened conscience applied

to the circumstances of life, and, regarding such issues as those raised in this article, the Christadelphian must exercise his or her conscience in the light of Scripture.

This is not intended to be a 'let-out clause', however. The writer of this article believes that a

Christadelphian who happens to have surplus money to 'invest' should remain separated unto God from the world, abhorring the gain of oppressions, and thus refraining from investing in stocks and shares. If this means accepting a lower financial return, then so be it.



Watchman

EDITOR: Nigel Bernard, 8 Front Street, Pembroke Dock, SA72 6JX.
Tel. 01646 685893; e-mail: na.bernard@ntlworld.com

The nations gather following terrorism in America

Nigel Bernard

IT IS WRITTEN concerning the days of Noah: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). The Lord Jesus said: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mt. 24:37). Whilst the Lord Jesus was alluding to other aspects of Noah's day, and not particularly to violence, nevertheless his words surely lead us to expect that in the days leading up to his return there will also be great violence.

The terrorist attacks in the United States of America on Tuesday 11 September 2001 show that we are indeed living in a brutally violent world. The callousness of the attacks, leading to thousands of people dying, defies the best efforts of the commentators to describe the enormity of what has happened. It is only by seeking help from the Word of God that a true perspective of events can be gained.

In the aftermath of the events, one of the common themes that emerged was that 'everything has changed'. There is a recognition that the world has now entered a new phase. People were quick to make a comparison with the effect that the attack on Pearl Harbor had on America in the Second World War, and the national trauma caused by the death of President Kennedy. But even these comparisons were seen by many as inadequate.

It is easy to overstate things. This is true not only of the world but also of ourselves, who are

alert to any small sign relating to the time of the end. However, it is clear that such an assessment of the events is not an exaggeration. The events have touched the hearts of people worldwide. The world is now seen as a more fearful place to live in.

The US President stated that America was now at war. This in itself is a fearful thing, but the nebulous nature of terrorism, as opposed to, for example, the clear identification of Japan as the enemy after Pearl Harbor, only serves to heighten fear and uncertainty. The Lord Jesus spoke of "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Lk. 21:26). If these words are intended to be applied to the last days of the Gentiles then recent events show that they are being fulfilled, as men's hearts are now more fearful than they were before.

In addition to an act of war against America, the attacks were also portrayed as an attack against democracy. Soon after the attack the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, assured people that "the spirit of democracy" would not be destroyed. The spirit of democracy in Scripture is likened to frogs: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth