

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast”

(Hymn 164, *Christadelphian Hymn Book*).

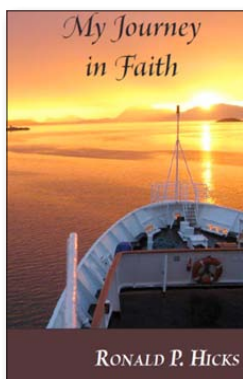
The advice of the Apostle Paul is, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17); and to the Ephesian ecclesia he said that, armed with the Word, they should be “praying always with all prayer and

supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (6:18). We must all stand before the Lord when he returns, to give account for things said and done. It may well be that, both as a community and as individuals, those lives revealed on social networking sites will cause us to be called to account by people and institutions here on earth prior to our Lord’s coming.

## Review

# A life of faith

Geoff Henstock



***My Journey in Faith*,  
Ronald P. Hicks.  
361 pages.  
Published by the  
Christadelphian Tidings.  
Available in the UK from  
Sister Muriel Whittaker  
([murielwhittaker@googlemail.com](mailto:murielwhittaker@googlemail.com)), £11.90.  
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**I**NFLUENCED, perhaps, by our Lord’s words in Luke 17:10 (“when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”), Christadelphians have been reluctant to write autobiographies. Brother Roberts started one (*My Days and My Ways*), but it was left to Brother C. C. Walker to complete the work. Others have penned biographies of Brother Thomas and Brother Roberts, but few have written about their own life. This makes Brother Ron Hicks’ book *My Journey in Faith* rather unusual.

Brother Ron acknowledges in the opening chapter his reluctance to write about his own life. It seemed “rather immodest”, and those who know him in the Brotherhood (a large number, it would seem from the book!) will agree that writing an autobiography ran contrary to his instincts. Nevertheless, Brother Ron was prevailed upon to write about his fascinating life, and in so doing he has rendered the Brotherhood a very valuable

service. Although Brother Ron regards himself as an ordinary brother in Christ, his has been no ordinary life. Starting with his childhood in Adelaide in a godly and dedicated family, Brother Ron describes a life that has reflected the values instilled in him by his parents, and from which the reader can draw many valuable lessons.

Even by Australian standards, Adelaide is rather a backwater. It does, however, have a heritage of religious freedom and diversity. From its early days it was a haven for religious dissenters who were unwelcome elsewhere. Just as Birmingham attracted many independently minded people from south Wales and elsewhere, thus creating a fertile ground for the preaching of the Truth, so Adelaide became home to many people who were highly responsive to the gospel message. The Adelaide Ecclesia was not yet fifty years old when Brother Ron was born, but already it numbered several hundred members.

Brother Ron describes the benefits of growing up in this large and active ecclesia. While expressing appreciation for the blessings of his home ecclesia, however, he also recognises and draws lessons from the weaknesses of that ecclesial environment. All ecclesias experience strains and stresses, and large ones create more than ample opportunities for these problems to be magnified. In his observations about these matters there are messages for ecclesias in many places well beyond Brother Ron’s home town.

Having embarked upon office work as a teenager, Brother Ron yearned for something more challenging, and enrolled to study economics. He could have had little idea of where this would

lead. As the book reveals, it led him away from Adelaide, first to Sydney and then overseas. Joining the then recently established Reserve Bank, Australia's central bank, Brother Ron was offered the opportunity to travel overseas—something which Australia's relative isolation and the high cost of international travel at that time denied to many others of his generation.

In those early years the bank sent him to India for a period, thus beginning a relationship with, and a deep affection for, the subcontinent that would blossom in ways he could not have imagined possible. This was a rare and wonderful opportunity for a young man, but even more extraordinary opportunities were to come his way when the bank created an opportunity for Brother Ron to be seconded to the IMF in Washington. This led eventually to his resigning from the Reserve Bank and joining the IMF as an employee.

The boy from suburban Adelaide was now a resident of Washington and a member of the Washington Ecclesia. Rather than being an Australian expatriate, however, Brother Ron's employment at the IMF made him almost an international citizen, although in truth and in essence he was always a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The IMF opened doors to Brother Ron that would never have opened otherwise, and he went through them to spread the Word and to strengthen the Brotherhood wherever opportunity arose.

Readers in all continents will find in *My Journey in Faith* many reminders of brother and sisters they have known and who have enriched Brother Ron's life since his youth. Brother Ron never married, but the sense of family is very strong in the book. His deep love for his parents and his family in Australia is a feature, but he also speaks with familial affection of the many brothers and sisters whose fellowship he has enjoyed. Whether it is in his descriptions of a campaign in the UK, a Bible School in the United States or a fraternal gathering in Africa, you can feel the warmth with which he remembers the fellowship he has been privileged to experience around the world.

Brother Ron's travels have taken him to a wide array of remarkable and in many cases rarely visited places. He has a knack for capturing the sights, sounds and smells of these places. Many people would struggle even to locate São Tomé and Príncipe or Tristan da Cunha on a map, let alone be able to write about their time in those remote places. Some readers will find especially interesting his comments about the Holy Land, which he visited on several occasions, the first

time prior to Israel's capture of Jerusalem. In these chapters he makes several observations about Biblical events and the geography of the Land which are worthy of consideration.

Also worthy of pondering, and perhaps the book's most valuable aspect, are Brother Ron's observations about preaching the Word. He tells an amusing story about a lecture at Washington on prophecy and the Middle East which is worth considering. Most valuable of all, however, are his comments and suggestions for the nurturing of new converts, and the importance of a solid grounding in first principles. Those comments are relevant not just in the mission fields; in fact, probably they are even more relevant for long-established ecclesias in the affluent Western world. While anything but a traditionalist, Brother Ron laments the decline in the understanding of first principles that has accompanied the demise of the weekly lecture in so many ecclesias. Those ecclesias which have largely dropped the public lecture would do well to consider how they can plug the gap created in relation to first principles.

The climax of the book, and arguably of Brother Ron's life, is the section dealing with his work for the IMF, but also and most importantly for God, in Bangladesh. Being assigned to Bangladesh is just one of many incidents in Brother Ron's life in which he sees the hand of God at work and directing his life in directions he would never have chosen of his own volition.

In the spirit of 1 Corinthians 3:7, Brother Ron would recognise that the establishment of the ecclesia in Bangladesh is the work of God through the willing labour of many workers. And so it is, but there can be no denying the fact that at the heart of that work was Brother Ron, raised up by God to bring the light of the gospel to that otherwise benighted land. Brother Ron having sown, and others having watered, God is continuing to give the increase in Bangladesh, and Brother Ron is pleased when opportunity arises to continue to support that work, even though he has now retired from the IMF.

*My Journey in Faith* is highly readable and enjoyable. Older readers will enjoy reminiscing over names of brothers and sisters who have been a part of Brother Ron's life. Younger readers will be encouraged to step forth in faith, allowing God to direct their lives to the glory and praise of Almighty God. All who read the book will be pleased that the author overcame his reticence in writing what is an inspiring story of a life well lived and lived well.