

A positive thinker's charter

Geoff Henstock



***Think on These Things*,
Colin Attridge.**

**Dawn Book Supply,
66 Carlton Road,
Nottingham, NG3 2AP,
www.dawnbooksupply.org.**

218 pages.

The website says the price is £3.50 but it is not clear whether this includes postage.

MANY BROTHERS and sisters will be familiar with Brother Colin Attridge's book *The Fruit of the Spirit*. His latest book, *Think on These Things*, is a companion volume to the earlier work, although each stands alone in its own right. Brother Colin has an engaging, conversational style of writing. His deft use of dry wit and humour, combined with a straightforward syntax, ensures that the book is readily accessible to readers at all stages of life. Acknowledging the simplicity of the sentences, however, must not be taken as implying that the material is presented simplistically. On the contrary; the contents are profound and edifying.

Like Brother Islip Collyer and Brother Dennis Gillett, Brother Colin is a spiritual philosopher with deep insights into the human psyche. He brings that skill to bear in twenty-three chapters of meditations drawn from the uplifting words of Paul in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things". And think on them Brother Colin does!

He opens his consideration by drawing attention to the somewhat negative image that has accrued to the concept of positive thinking, largely because the term has been adulterated by association with slick motivational speakers peddling some form of feel-good self-help mantra or system. Such versions of positive thinking are indeed valueless. Brother Colin shows, however, that, when based on a robust and vibrant faith in

Almighty God, positive thinking is in fact entirely Scriptural and a natural posture for a disciple of Christ. He portrays Philippians 4:8 as a "positive thinker's charter". As one with a natural tendency towards pessimism I found this approach powerful and uplifting.

The devotional and motivational ideas developed in this book are underpinned by sound Biblical exposition. Obviously the nature of this work lends itself to word studies, an area of exegesis in which Brother Attridge has considerable skill. Sprinkled throughout the book there are also incisive comments on a wide range of Scriptural passages, such as Genesis 13:9, Proverbs 7:2 and Matthew 22:37. Among these is an interesting analysis of the 'pure water' of Revelation 22:1 that repays careful consideration. A chapter focusing on the person of Joseph, the husband of Mary, offers intriguing insights into this remarkable character. Not all readers will agree with all that is suggested, but all will profit from giving thought to what is written. With so much valuable exposition in the book it is a pity that no index has been included to allow for ease of later recall. Readers will be well advised to keep a pencil and note pad handy and compile their own index.

The author's scholarship is also manifested in the many quotations from and allusions to non-Biblical sources. How often does a Christadelphian work quote from or allude to William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Mary Shelley, Sigmund Freud, William Blake, Oscar Wilde and John Bunyan (the last three all within the same chapter!)? These are just a few of the sources he uses. There are also allusions to more popular cultural media in the form of references to W. C. Fields and to the movie *Star Wars*; the significance of the latter being lost on this reader, but no doubt appreciated by others. McDonalds even scores a mention! In his preface Brother Colin refers to the fact that non-Christadelphian readers might read the book; his reference to such sources might increase the book's appeal to such an audience.

Reference has already been made to the author's use of humour and his philosophical approach. These attributes unite in an intensely interesting chapter about humour and its role in the life of the disciple. Many disciples struggle

with this issue, and Brother Colin develops a thesis which allows them to adopt an appropriate balance in their pilgrimage.

Another philosophical digression readers should enjoy is a discussion of the nature and form of the Deity, under the intriguing heading, "The God who is everywhere and somewhere". Brother Colin's comments here are challenging—he admits that in part they are speculative—but they are well reasoned and presented. His analysis moves beyond just the "anthropomorphic debate" about Scriptural references to the hand or arm of God to an altogether loftier plane. As with his comments on Joseph, some readers will find that they do not agree with all that is written, but they will benefit from reviewing the case the author makes.

As well as being highly spiritual, the book is intensely practical, reflecting the fact that these two things are never antithetical. An excellent example of the book's strength in this regard is its coverage of the importance of friendship in the life of the believer. This vital subject is not often

given the prominence it deserves. Brother Colin's advice, drawn from both personal experience and an appreciation of Scripture, is helpful and challenging, even though some readers may be rather surprised to read his thoughtful analysis of Proverbs 18:24.

Think on These Things is a book that would be enjoyed by all, from the newly baptized to advanced Bible students. It may be especially valuable for brothers and sisters who feel downhearted or for whom the way of life seems particularly difficult; those whose pilgrimage has been blighted by negativity and who perhaps have become embittered by the trials of life. It would also be suitable for "interested friends" (as opposed to "visitors"; for the significance of this you will need to read page 140) and unbaptized young people as a means of introducing them to the joys and challenges of discipleship. In short, it is heartily recommended to all who wish to be uplifted and encouraged in their service before Almighty God.

The tower of the flock

David Green

THE TOWER of the flock, otherwise known as the tower of Edar (Eder) or Migdal Edar, is mentioned twice in Scripture. In Genesis 35:19-21 it is recorded that Jacob, following the death of Rachel, pastured his flocks there. The only other reference is the symbolic one found in Micah 4:8. This study looks at the Jewish and Christian traditions regarding this place, and the underlying meaning of its symbolic use in Micah's prophecy.

Jacob's visit to the tower of Edar

Jacob was travelling from Bethel to Bethlehem (Ephrath) when Rachel died in childbirth. After burying Rachel in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; 48:7) he "journeyed, and spread his tent *beyond* the tower of Edar" (35:21). According to *Ellicott's Commentary* the Hebrew word translated "beyond" includes the idea of 'up to' or 'as far as'. Jacob appears to have stayed in the region of the tower of Edar near Bethlehem to pasture his flocks. This tower would be a watchtower used to protect the flock from wild beasts and thieves. Presumably the tower already existed when Jacob

visited the area, although the place may have been named from a tower that no longer existed in his days. Alternatively the name may have been given to the site at a later date, but before Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

The location of the tower of Edar

Sometime later Jacob travelled on to Hebron to meet up with Isaac (v. 27). For this reason it has been concluded that the tower of Edar lay between Bethlehem and Hebron. In the fourth century A.D. there was a tower located about a mile from Bethlehem,¹ which was believed to be the tower of Edar. This may have been the case, but if so it would have been a very ancient structure, more than 2,000 years having elapsed since the days of Jacob. Perhaps it had been rebuilt in the intervening period. Eusebius translated the name 'Edar' incorrectly as 'shepherds' rather than 'flock' because this place was the traditional site for the angels appearing to the shepherds at the birth of

1. Both Eusebius and Jerome refer to it being a thousand paces from Bethlehem.