

CHRISTADELPHIAN

CRISIS

The Christadelphian community at this time is in a very, very peculiar position. The basic belief upon which the whole edifice of their faith is founded has been categorically denied by the Editor in the official magazine "The Christadelphian." Nothing which has happened since the Inspiration division of 1884 can be compared with the situation arising from the doctrinal conflict of view revealed in the issue of March 1965. It will be sometime before the majority realize the significance of the revolution which is taking place, but if there is not in the very near future a major upheaval it will prove beyond a doubt that doctrine no longer matters enough to argue about it. So long as unity can be maintained and a superficial peace prevail, one can now be a Christadelphian and believe what one likes.

The brief facts are that a certain J.Wilkins of Downend contributes a letter to the discussion about the resurrection nature of Christ; did He rise from the tomb mortal or immortal? Quite correctly, the writer points out that the view traditionally held by Christadelphians goes contrary to the doctrine of The Atonement contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews and he comes to the conclusion which many of us reached long ago, that Jesus rose in incorruptible nature. More significantly here however, is the outline he gives of what he believes to be Christadelphian doctrine about human nature and this, in an editorial comment is rejected, completely and unequivocally as unsound! The inevitable question is, which of these is true Christadelphianism, what J.Wilkins says or the opposite, as says the Editor. It will be quite easy to answer that question because there are plenty of witnesses and plenty of evidence. It will not be quite so easy for most to decide which is the true teaching of Scripture, because although they know very well what they believe and by long habit have called it "The Truth," they are also accustomed to thinking that what "The Christadelphian" says must always be right.

The whole of J.Wilkin's letter ought to be read, but it will suffice for our purpose to quote two short passages. These are as follows:-

"The 'devil,' human nature, sin in the flesh, we know to be synonymous terms."

That is the first extract, and most Christadelphians would endorse it; it is what they have always understood and believed. The next is:-

"It was necessary for 'the devil,' sin in the flesh, human nature, to be condemned and destroyed. This Jesus has done by means of death by crucifixion. Jesus knew that the bronze serpent signified sin's flesh, human nature, which he bore and which he knew he had to crucify in himself. We do not think it would be possible for human nature to be more powerfully and more significantly condemned than by crucifixion. Jesus destroyed his human nature because he knew it separated him from God... Jesus condemned the human nature he received from his mother... It was our human nature he had to condemn and destroy and to do this he had to share it."

Again, few Christadelphians would find fault with this, at least not publicly. It is the explanation of The Atonement given in Christadelphian works and by Christadelphian speakers and writers for nearly a century. The identification of Jesus with the brazen serpent was made with complete assurance by W.F.Barling in "Redemption in Christ Jesus," published in the magazine in May 1946, without any word of editorial dissent and many others have written similar things. Recently, in Australia, "The Logos" printed an article entitled "The Leper Wail," referring to the last words of Jesus from the cross - He, Jesus, was the leper, wailing to God because of uncleanness! This circulated here and overseas without any outcry or protest because it is standard Christadelphian

teaching. Now comes the staggering development. In the same issue, commenting on Wilkins' letter, the Editor positively refutes the whole thing. He denies the basic premise that human nature is synonymous with the devil and sin and thus invalidates the reasoning about the Atonement which is based upon it. Here are his actual words:-

“Human nature is not ‘sin,’ human nature is not ‘the devil.’ It was not human nature that was condemned but sin, in all its manifestations and wherever it had sway.”

This is clear enough of itself, but then lest anyone might still imagine that somehow there is nevertheless something in our nature which one may loosely describe as ‘sin,’ he says “Sin is lawlessness.”

Now we of The Nazarene Fellowship have been saying exactly this since 1873, when Edward Turney made the same declaration and was charged by Robert Roberts with having renounced the truth and so he coined the term “Renunciationist Heresy” to denote what we believe. We think in fact that the view of human nature and the explanation of The Atonement given by J.Wilkins are abominable and shameful, but there is no doubt whatever that they are the authentic Christadelphian views. But the Editor says that when the reality of the death on the Cross is recognized, “the structure of Bro.Wilkins’ argument fails to the ground.” It is certainly obvious to anyone that an interpretation of The Atonement which says that its purpose was to condemn human nature because human nature is the devil, falls apart once it is admitted that human nature is not in fact the devil. And this is what the Editor has now done. But the collapse leaves a tremendous hole in Christadelphian doctrine, for there is literally nothing left of their traditional explanation of the very crux of Christianity, the Sacrifice of Christ, for the basic assumption on which it is founded is now admitted to be false.

Thus we have the truly remarkable situation that on adjoining pages of their magazine, diametrically opposite declarations are made upon a vital first principle, both by Christadelphians, both claiming to be Christadelphianism, yet the one utterly destructive of the other. If the Editor is right, and we are quite sure that he is, he not only convicts J.Wilkins of uttering gross and pernicious error, but he also convicts of the same crime many eminent Christadelphians, from former editors like Robert Roberts and C.C.Walker right down to W.F.Barling and A.D.Norris, who in their various writings have said repeatedly - and are still saying - with emphasis and conviction, exactly the same as J.Wilkins. It will perhaps be noticed that the name of the late Editor. John Carter is missing from the above list. This is because in his later years he was undoubtedly moving in the same direction as his successor, to the extent that in Australia he was openly charged with advocating what is called the ‘Clean Flesh Heresy.’ All the same, he was guilty of the publication of “Redemption in Christ Jesus” by W.F.Barling, in which it was categorically affirmed “For Christadelphians human flesh is wholly evil,” furthermore, when the present writer circulated a letter saying just what L.G.Sargent has said and was subsequently disfellowshipped by the Suffolk Street ecclesia, John Carter referred to it as the work of “a renegade brother.” In the same way, the present Editor is culpable, knowing what he knows, for publishing the atrocious “Confession of Faith” concocted by A.D.Norris, which presents the morbid picture of the human race as a procession of miserable creatures with Jesus at their head, creeping guiltily towards the grave because their human nature, defiled by the sin of Adam, is the source of temptation. He said of Jesus, He welcomed death because this was the only way in which the disposition of the nature He bore could be finally conquered. I do not think there can ever have been another religious fanatic who has done so much injury to the name and cause of the Saviour he professes to serve. As we pointed out in “The Norris Confession,” if there is one thing above all others which the life of Jesus proves to us, it is that He conquered the dispositions of human nature in His life, that is, by living obediently, and not by dying.

Having read the astounding exchanges in the March issue, the following two letters were despatched:-

1st letter:-

The Christadelphian
404 Shaftmoor Lane
Birmingham 28

Halesowen
1st March 1965

Dear L.G.Sargent,

Forgive the curtness as I do not know if you would care for me to address you Bro. and Mr. seems unfriendly. I have read your comment on page 127 this month and am glad to see the extent to which our views are in agreement. If there had been anyone in your position twenty years ago able to write: "It was not human nature that was held under judgment and condemned, but sin in all its manifestations and wherever it had sway," I do not think I should have felt compelled to take the painful decision I then did and carry on the campaign commenced by Edward Turney.

I am afraid you must be only too well aware that what you say is in complete conflict with what Christadelphians have always believed and there will be no lack of those who will tell you so. Personally, I thank God that you have recognized so much of the truth and found the courage to state it and I do not want to aggravate the difficulty of your position. I must confess I cannot imagine how you are going to handle the die-hard sin-in-the-flesh mongers without division, but I am sure that the only hope for the community is to face the issue and deliver itself from the intolerable burden of error laid upon it by Robert Roberts. I had a letter recently from Australia in which a brother says, "John Carter very adroitly shifted the corpse of sin-in-the-flesh on to the shoulders of "The Old Paths," saying, "You believe that, we never did, and cleverly passing it off as Andrewism." One cannot approve the tactics, but clearly it would be a good thing if the dregs of Robertism were to be mopped up by "The Logos" group and "The Old Paths," setting the majority free to believe and preach the true Gospel of Christ.

I feel bound to say, however, that while I am thankful that you personally have realized that sin and the devil are not synonyms for human nature, I do not see how you can honourably avoid a frank confession, either that you have never held the view or that you have changed your ground. I do not need to remind you that from the Statement of Faith where sin is said to have literally defiled and become implanted in human nature, throughout Christadelphian works like "The Slain Lamb," "The Blood of Christ," "The Atonement" and "Redemption in Christ Jesus" by Barling, the flesh is presented as the cause and origin of sin and human nature synonymous with diabolos. Now that you admit that this is not so, it seems to me to be a matter of literary ethics, a clear duty which as an editor and writer you owe to your readers, to declare yourself. Much more, as a religious leader and elder, is it a duty owed to those who trust you not to leave them in doubt and confusion which they must be suffering now. I give you credit for honesty of purpose and respect for truth for its own sake in having stated your view in contrast to Wilkins, who, however foolish, has unquestionably very fairly put the traditional Christadelphian view, but you will be doing an ill-service to everyone, not least to yourself, if you leave it so or attempt to gloss it over and put our clothes on in the way John Carter did. If you now accept that there is nothing wrong with human flesh and that what man needs is a change of character and relationship to God, then you should plainly say so, putting it clearly in contrast with the view still widely held that it is impossible for us to please God because of our defective nature. If you fail now to bring the whole issue into the open so that it can be cleared up, with the understanding if not with the acceptance of everyone, the result will only be deeper and worse confusion, probably division in any case and final complete disintegration.

I have said that I can appreciate the difficulty of your position, but I doubt the wisdom of quoting from "The Blood of Christ" in dealing with Wilkins and the like. I do not find fault with Robert Roberts's reasoning on the particular point you quote him, but you know well enough that it is in that same pamphlet that he gives one of the most outrageous versions of Christadelphian doctrine – "It pleased God to require the ceremonial condemnation of this sin-nature in crucifixion in the person of a righteous possessor of it as the basis of our forgiveness." I think I may assume that you agree with me in regarding this as a most horrible perversion, but I can easily imagine how utterly bewildered Wilkins and many others will feel, cherishing beliefs thoroughly well founded upon this and similar

passages in the literature your Office publishes and finding on the very same page in which you quote it as an authority, the words, "It was not human nature that was condemned." I think if I were a Christadelphian I should be more than disquieted.

There is only one phrase in your comment to which I would object - you may regard it only as a mild concession to tradition or you may feel there is evidence for it, but it contradicts your reasoning about sin. You say, "He conquered sin and destroyed its power in himself." He certainly conquered sin, but in view of your other statements how can you say He destroyed its power IN Himself? Sin had no power in Jesus. You say quite correctly, "Sin is not the mortal body, not human nature, but lawlessness;" Jesus was never lawless. The Roberts' doctrine involves Jesus in sin by making sin synonymous with human nature, but you recognize that this is wrong; therefore I ask you, how could Jesus destroy in Himself something which was not there at all? The nearest you come is to say that human nature is prone to sin, but you admit that all his life Jesus overcame sin by rendering perfect obedience, which proves that He at least was not prone to sin and that there was nothing in him needing to be destroyed to make Him acceptable to God. To experience temptation and overcome it does not prove that man is prone to sin; it is evidence that he is capable of sinning, but the only thing it proves is that he is capable of overcoming temptation and being a perfect man. Actually, what you call proneness to sin is no more than the urge to satisfy the natural needs and desires - an aspect of the instinct for self-preservation which is a vital law of nature - and it is only when law enters and the lusts are exercised in defiance of law that they become sin. You recognize also that it is within man's power to change from the service of sin to the service of righteousness. Would you say that after he has obeyed that form of teaching to which you refer and has changed masters, he is still the servant of sin? I think not. So therefore, far less in the case of Jesus, who was always the servant of righteousness, can the natural inclinations of human nature to which like us He was subject but always controlled, have made Him a slave of sin. Yet this is precisely the argument of that shameful Confession of A.D. Norris - Christ had to repudiate and destroy his human body because it was the nature of fallen man!

If the fact that Christ's body was not destroyed is a valid argument against Wilkins, it is an even more powerful argument against A.D.Norris, who said that when Jesus died the devil hung there dead. Wilkins does not understand why Jesus sacrificed himself any more than Norris, but at least he has the wit to realize that having once died in the flesh He could only be raised in the Spirit. A.D.Norris cannot even see that if Jesus' nature was what he says it was then the devil is now sitting on the right hand of the Father!

Your exposition of Romans 8:3 is substantially correct, almost exactly in agreement with Edward Turney's and completely contrary to "The Slain Lamb." Robert Roberts professed never to be able to see a distinction between quality of flesh and ownership, but you have put it quite clearly - Christ the likeness of sin's flesh, the same flesh but not the slave of sin. Do you not feel it would be simple justice to those of us who have been called Clean Flesh Heretics, disfellowshipped, misrepresented as believing that Jesus' nature was different from our own and treated generally as crackpots for so many years, to acknowledge that this is all that we have ever contended? Even as recently as in "Redemption in Christ Jesus," which John Carter published, Barling says on Romans 7, "Clearly, therefore, Paul is speaking of his literal flesh," whereas you say what is obviously true, "It is clear that the language is highly metaphorical."

I do not see how you can now fail to go on from the point you have reached to the true explanation of The Atonement. You have surrendered the position held by Robert Roberts that the crucifixion was the ritual destruction of sinful flesh and so far as I can see the only one left is that which recognizes the principle of ransom established in the Old Testament. You indeed admit that the blood of Christ is a symbol deriving from the ritual of the laws of sacrifice and that the reality is the death on the Cross; but there must be some reason or explanation behind that - to say it was a sacrifice only states the fact; the problem is how and why such a sacrifice was necessary in the purpose of God to make eternal salvation possible. I cannot see much point in your doubt whether or not all the blood drained from Jesus' body when He died or why our conception goes awry if we think of His blood as

a literal substance involved in the process of atonement. It was literal blood. It was literally poured out. It did literally contain his natural life and He never did receive this back again. Therefore it seems self-evident that this is what He gave as the ransom price to redeem us, as He Himself stated. This is, in fact, the way it worked. "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many." The Atonement is plain and simple - once one realizes that the thing lost in Eden was the right to life. If their minds were not cluttered up with the idea of physically defiled nature, J.Wilkins would not be worrying himself about why Jesus had to "condemn the human nature he received from his mother;" that poor confused old fire-engine Philip Hall would have been able to defend his own faith instead of copying out a chunk of "Nazareth Revisited" and Fred Barling would not have plumbed the depths of foolishness with the suggestion that Jesus' three days in the grave was "a brief prolongation of the days of his flesh" or in other words his death a continuation of his life!

Just one other point, the force of which I think you will recognize. In your treatment of Romans 8:3 you correctly explain the metaphor of sin as a master and say, "Christ was not a slave because he rejected temptation." The truth I think is rather more than this. If Jesus had succumbed to temptation He would have become a slave to sin, as Adam did, but initially He was not a slave because He was born free; He was the heir, a son born in the house as he explained to Peter, in contrast to us who were born outside and in slavery. So that by obedience He retained what He had as a birthright and which Adam lost for himself and his offspring by disobedience, and when the time came Jesus demonstrated His Father's love and mercy by spending His riches to buy our freedom. This is where the truth clinches all the facts together with a logical explanation of the Virgin Birth. I do not need to tell you - since the fact that you do not bring it into your exposition shows you are conscious of it - how the Christadelphian explanation of the same fact dishonours God, dehumanises Christ and demoralises man.

I have said frankly what I have to say and I hope you will not feel that I have been offensive. I do not know if you would be interested to discuss any of these or other points, but if so, I should be very pleased to talk to you. I cannot offer to call on you as my health does not permit me to go out during these months, but you would be very welcome if you would care to come here.

Yours sincerely in the hope of the life to come,

ERNEST BRADY.

2nd letter:-

1 Springfield Gardens
London NW9

25th February 1965

Dear Fred Barling,

I read your letter with interest and I should think L.G.Sargent's Comment on page 127 presents you with a problem. I assume you still adhere to the view you expressed in "Redemption in Christ Jesus" that "human flesh is a body of sin in the case of both sinner and sinless" and I wonder how you feel about his statement that "sin is not the mortal body."

J.Wilkins' letter summarizes almost word for word your chief arguments in the same book and of that L.G. Sargent says that when seen in the light of reality "the structure falls to the ground." How do you feel today about the things you said 20 years ago? Would you still affirm that Diabolos was located in the flesh of Jesus?

In "Redemption in Christ Jesus," in reference to Romans 7 you said "Clearly, therefore, Paul is speaking of his literal flesh," but L.G.Sargent says in his Comment, "It is clear that the language is

highly metaphorical.” Does your reference to unjustified dogmatism imply that you have modified your view or are you still of the same mind?

I am intrigued by your idea that Jesus’ three days in the grave was “a brief prolongation of the days of his flesh.” I hope you will not take it as offensive if I say that I know your mind works strangely, but I cannot imagine how anyone can regard the death state as in any sense a prolongation of life. This seems to me to be another of the many untenable positions into which one may be driven by a refusal to face the truth.

Yours sincerely,

E.BRADY.

At the time of writing, no reply has been received to either of these letters. In the case of the second, none was to be expected, as the letter was intentionally caustic and the only alternatives open to him were to eat his own words or impeach the Editor and neither would have been very palatable. Many people, however, will think that ordinary literary courtesy would have demanded at least an acknowledgement of a not altogether unfriendly letter from one in the position of L.G.Sargent. One must recognize the difficulty of the situation for him and his natural fear of the use which might be made of any answer, but there can be no dispute about the facts and had he limited himself to no more than “Yes, I am in rather a difficult position, so don’t make things worse,” I should have felt compelled out of consideration for his personal problem to treat the matter differently and avoid the appearance of putting him in the pillory. As he has in fact ignored me I am free, indeed I think I have no alternative in the interest of what we both now see to be the truth, to bring the issue into the open in this way. At the same time I am sorry to put ammunition into the hands of his opponents like “The Old Paths” group, since we are both fighting on the same side and I trust he will be able to realize that these are the faithful wounds of a friend. From one point of view “The Old Paths” has the right idea; where personal salvation is concerned, reunity and community do not matter much, but the paths they have taken are unfortunately only old enough to take them back to the ditch which Robert Roberts fell into! The old paths they really wanted were marked out by the Apostles and to find them again they will have to go, not to “The Slain Lamb” but to The Scriptures, with minds cleared of the fiction of original sin involving physical condemnation and realize as the Editor has done, that the Devil is not human nature but the personification of ungodliness.

To repeat what I said in my letter to him, I am thankful to see that he accepts that it was not human nature which was condemned, but my worry is the suspicion I mentioned in “Thinking It Over.” I am afraid that these admissions are part of a calculated design to gloss over the difference between what Christadelphians have always stood for and what many are now beginning to realize is the truth - a studied plan to gradually eliminate the doctrine of sinful flesh and bit by bit replace it with the truth that there is nothing wrong with our nature and only our relationship to God needs changing. If this is really the intention, and all the indications point that way, it is fraudulent and no good will come of it. This is the doctrinal dry-cleaning process. John Carter commenced it by writing that there is no such thing as hyphenated sin-in-the-flesh, when for nearly a century Christadelphians have been excusing their bad behaviour by blaming that very fact. A classic example of this unutterable folly was in an article signed Peter Watkins in “The Christadelphian,” where he said:

“If we are truly in Christ, it is not we that have sinned, but it is the irrepressible Adamic nature that has sinned, but it is the irrepressible Adamic nature that has obtruded itself. As long as we deplore our transgressions - as long as they are committed despite ourselves and not because of ourselves - we remain in Christ and righteous.”

No one has ever yet named a sin which we can commit despite ourselves, but this statement has never been corrected and probably still forms a part of its pitiable author’s faith. When people have been nurtured upon such Roman Catholic rubbish it is vain to hope to root it out and replace it with the truth without them realising what has happened to them. These spots cannot be got out by any

sort of dry-cleaning. The garments will need to be washed, in tears and repentance, if they are ever to come clean. There is no painless, gradual process by which error can be changed into truth. If the Christadelphian belief that human nature is full of sin is at last seen to be false, it must be consciously and purposefully rejected for what it is - a relic of the Apostasy and a blasphemy against God, otherwise they will never have anything to cover their nakedness but a dirty mixture of shoddy man-made fibres with a few threads of truth.

Nothing could illustrate better the confusion and contradiction which prevails now in the Christadelphian world than a thing which happened to me recently. After I had written "The Norris Confession" I received among a considerable volume of correspondence, a letter from a certain Christadelphian full of indignation, heaping reproaches upon me for always attacking and 'persecuting' the brethren. In the course of his letter it became apparent that so far from sharing the view of Norris, that the death of Jesus was required because He bore human nature, he himself believed that Jesus' nature was divine. He said in his letter, "How then could the Lamb of God take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, if that self was the nature of fallen man?" One almost despairs, but summoning what patience I could muster I replied: -

"You not only stultify yourself but convict yourself of the most appalling ignorance of Christadelphian doctrine, which is the exact opposite of this, namely that Jesus had to be the actual sinful flesh of fallen man so that it could be destroyed on the Cross. This was the precise point in Norris's Confession which I have attacked because I think it is an abominable perversion, and yet you have not the discrimination to see that you yourself reject it too. What you do not seem able to grasp is that there is nothing wrong with flesh - man is not fallen in the sense that his nature is defective, but in being alienated from God. Jesus was ordinary human flesh and as such He was corruptible (not corrupt - you mix up things which are entirely different; a creature can be physically corruptible without being morally corrupt) and had the laws of nature been allowed to operate when He lay in the tomb He would have seen corruption. You should beware what you imply when you ask me "Was not Jesus begotten of God?" Of course He was, but this did not make His flesh different from ours or give Him strength we do not have. You convict yourself of believing that Jesus did not in fact come in the flesh but a mixture of human and divine nature and this is a gross error. It was not because Jesus was the Son of God that He was sinless, but because He made it His meat and drink to do His will. It was because He was God's Son that He was in a position to give Himself a sacrifice for us. If He had been a son of Adam He would have needed a sacrifice for Himself and therefore could not have been a sacrifice for anyone else. As Son of God, although a corruptible man, Jesus was legally clean by birth; we may be made clean through the washing of the Word and this was made possible by His offering of Himself for us. He was born free; we can become free through Him,"

Subsequently I asked him a few simple questions which brought him face to face with the blunders he had made and the upshot was he refused to write any further. Instead - and this is the point I have been coming to - he sent me a copy of "Glad Tidings" dated November 1964, inscribed with a note saying, "These magazines are valuable to the babe in Christ that he may grow thereby." I was not exactly devastated by this sarcasm and as he himself had evidently not gained much benefit from them himself and was manifestly handicapped by a considerable degree of ignorance and incapacity for simple reasoning, I stopped needling him and read the article he had marked in "Glad Tidings" entitled "Sacrifice." This disgusted me even more than he.

The connection with the matter in hand is that there was an advertisement on the back cover of "The Christadelphian" for a brother with clerical experience to help in publishing "Glad Tidings." Seeing the notice, I recalled what I had read in that article and it occurred to me that it would have been wiser for "The Christadelphian" management to seek the services of someone who could effectively suppress it rather than help to publish it. If there is any virtue in the dry-cleaning process I have mentioned there is scope for it here. The article "Sacrifice" was written by a certain A. Cochrane and is in the form of a conversation. A pretended enquirer is made to ask questions to

which the author replies, professing to give honest scriptural answers expounding simple first principles. Here is a sample passage from it and upon which, as a babe in Christ, I am recommended to nourish myself:

The questioner, B, asks:

“Would you say then that his death was for himself,”

The Christadelphian, A, replies:

“Undoubtedly. Firstly as a means of physical cleansing; of destroying the devil or sin in his own flesh; and secondly because the offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin was an express command from God.”

This exchange reveals the very worst aspect of Christadelphian teaching, a conception of the death of Christ which is the most shameful and perverse ever invented; for be assured it was invented. No one, neither the pretended enquirer nor A. Cochrane, who answers him, ever found such a doctrine in the Bible. It is of course based on the idea that sin defiled human nature and therefore to destroy sin human nature had to be destroyed. Now that one with the authority of the Editor has admitted that human nature is not a synonym for sin, perhaps there will be an end to this God-dishonouring conception, though who will silence the bigots, short of Jesus Himself one cannot imagine. It is worse than anything to be found in Roman Catholicism; far worse in its reflection upon the character and ways of God than belief in a personal devil; far more destructive of truth than the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. It would be better to believe nothing at all than to believe what A. Cochrane says, that Jesus died for Himself; better to be an honest unbeliever than to stand for such a disgraceful misrepresentation of our Saviour's death. That question and answer in “Glad Tidings” should have been printed in red ink - in scarlet, the colour of shame and infamy, for that is what they are, shameful and infamous.

It was when, over 20 years ago, we became aware of the unyielding insistence upon this horrid doctrine by men like those already mentioned in this country and others like P.O. Barnard and J. Mansfield in Australia that we renounced it and outraged our friends by attacking it. Many a time since then we have been told that we are flogging a dead horse, that Christadelphians do not really believe or teach such things or that they do not mean exactly what they seem to mean. When one has pointed out that it is specifically mentioned in the Statement of Faith as a scripturally attested article of faith necessary to be believed, we have been told that it is a dead letter which no one notices any longer. The fact that the Reunion of 1956 was negotiated on the basis of a declared reaffirmation of the Statement of Faith in the Carter-Cooper Addendum is by many frankly admitted to have been an expedient which did not bind anyone to acceptance of it as a creed or definition of current belief and certainly the way it was treated by John Carter at the time of his Australian tour bears this out. Then, suddenly - here it is again, as late as November 1964 in “Glad Tidings” advertised in “The Christadelphian,” very far from a dead letter, blatant and unashamed, exactly as originated by Robert Roberts – “Would you say then that his death was for himself?” and the reply, “UNDOUBTEDLY.” No perhaps, or possibly, or we used to think so, but the emphatic “Undoubtedly.” It is little short of insolent that on another page of the same periodical there is an article under the title “How Christianity was Betrayed.” There was surely never a betrayal of Christ or of Christianity as dastardly as this which effectively eliminates any real element of sacrifice from the death of Christ by declaring that it was for His own salvation and at the express command of God. If the death of Christ was for Himself, why is there never a hint of the fact in Scripture? Why is a conclusion of such far-reaching effect only to be inferred - and inferred from a postulate which is now admitted to be unfounded? Often and repeatedly in Scripture we are told why He died - for us, for sinners, for all, for many, for His sheep, for the unjust and never once does it say He died for Himself or suggest that He was included amongst those for whom He died. In fact, in the only place where it might have been, it says exactly the opposite, “After three score and two months shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”

If Jesus' death was in any sense for Himself then it really cannot have been a sacrifice at all. Reason it out. If His death was necessary for His own salvation then if He had not died as He did He would have perished; the one thing follows from the other. But if He would have perished had He not submitted to crucifixion, how could it have been for us or for anyone but Himself? This is the inevitable conclusion. It is a dilemma from which there is no escape. If He had not died on the Cross He would not now be alive in heaven but dead, perished for ever. How then could His death be called a sacrifice, even at the command of God? What does this make of Jesus? If such was the case, to say the least He was considerably less than frank in His explanations - one would be justified in feeling that it verged on dishonesty to claim to be doing something for us when in fact it was for Himself. Could He have justly claimed our gratitude if all the while His death was inescapable and primarily for Himself? It really makes Jesus guilty of a fraud in claiming that He was doing voluntarily for us what in fact was unavoidable and for Himself because otherwise He would have perished. Can anyone bear to think this? It seems evident that at least the writer in "Glad Tidings" can accommodate the thought that Jesus always kept to Himself the very material fact that His own eternal existence depended upon His own sacrifice upon the Cross and contented Himself with professing that He was laying down His life for His sheep. It would perhaps be more charitable to assume that he has never thought out the implications of his own theory; perhaps like some we have met, he is so busy with ecclesial work that he has never given himself time to think out whether what he is occupied with is the work of the Truth or the work of a social organization founded upon what others once thought was the truth. Anyone who has the hardihood to declare that Jesus' death was undoubtedly for Himself, ought at the very least to have asked himself what the word "sacrifice" means and why it is used in reference to the death of Jesus. If Jesus had not chosen willingly to suffer the penalty of sin instead of sinners, He could have claimed His right to immortality and entered heaven alone. If anyone disputes this, let him state the facts on which he does so and then compare them with what the Editor of "The Christadelphian" has said on page 127. If, having done this he will consider that as Son of God, born heir to all things created by His Father and proved by test perfectly obedient, it was impossible that He should see corruption and therefore His death could only have been a voluntary act of sacrifice on our behalf. What did He surrender in this act? His life - the spirit which animated His flesh and made Him a living man. This is what He gave. Who did He give it to? No one - He simply surrendered it by dying. His life was extinguished when His blood was shed and when His breath left His body. It was a life paid in the same way as a criminal pays for his crime with his life; it is not paid to anyone, simply forfeited. But in this case the one who died was not a criminal suffering for a crime, but a perfect man who chose to give His life in the stead of others. Anyone again who disputes this, supposing he has realised by reading what L.G.Sargent has written what the sacrifice of Christ WAS NOT, will be in a position to read his Bible unencumbered by the idea that flesh is sinful and find out what it really was.

Now look at the other side of the matter by considering the reasons given by A. Cochrane to justify his statement. He says that Jesus' death was firstly a means of physical cleansing. What is the evidence on which he makes this assertion? Where is death ever prescribed as a cleansing process? By one of those queer coincidences which seem to happen so often to make things more difficult for Christadelphians, the very issue from which we have quoted has in the letter from Philip Hall a statement by Robert Roberts to the effect that His death was not a cleansing but a defilement "He was in the defilement which contact with death imparted to everything for those under the Law of Moses." This is scripturally correct and the exact opposite of what it says in "Glad Tidings," showing how little A. Cochrane has thought about what he writes or indeed how little he knows what Christadelphianism really is. But how are we to account for such downright contradictions between the exposition in one Christadelphian journal and that in another which is advertised in its pages? He next says that Jesus' death was a means of destroying the devil, or sin, in His own flesh. This is a statement that comes as readily to the lips of a Christadelphian as Hail Mary mother of God to a Roman Catholic, and a few years ago we should have felt obliged to go to some length to show that it is unscriptural to the point of blasphemous to say that Jesus had the devil in His flesh when He was in fact sinless and holy. Now, however, we are content to refer him to the Editor of "The Christadelphian" and his declaration that sin is not the mortal body, the flesh not a synonym for the devil; sin is lawlessness. Obviously there will have to come a moment of truth when the advocates of

these differing and conflicting opinions will have to face the problem of deciding who is right and who wrong. Someone then has either to recant and accept the discipline of the majority or there will be division and they will have to separate and pursue their different courses in the company of those who support them. It is clear from some remarks by the Editor and by A.D.Norris in the April issue that this crisis is approaching fast. The former says "The Brotherhood is being put to the test" and he refers to "a symptom of a wider area of disquiet within the Brotherhood." He does not - perhaps dare not - admit that this wider area of disquiet is centred on the very subject we are concerned with and upon which he himself has said sufficient to set the whole issue ablaze. The latter in "Our Heritage," says "The Statement of Faith still represents the Christadelphian position and if in essential matters anyone came sincerely to the conviction that the standpoint of the community was mistaken he would have the honourable opportunity of leaving us." This is a Norrisism for the blunt "either conform or get out." It would puzzle anyone to find a more essential matter than whether our flesh is full of sin or not and there must now be more who are sincerely convinced that the standpoint of the community on it is utterly mistaken than otherwise, so that it may end up with himself having to take the honourable opportunity!

The overt discussion at the moment only touches the fringe of the subject, in particular whether the serpent was literal or figurative, but the underlying disquiet is due to the fact that many are beginning to realize that the curse on the ground could no more fill the nature of man with sin than could the curse upon the serpent cause snakes which formerly walked upright to go on their bellies and ingest dust. All that need be said is that a literal snake in the Garden of Eden, itself under no law, could induce a thought in the mind of Eve which led to the knowledge of good and evil. If it were recognized simply that in Genesis the natural things are made the basis of spiritual lessons we should not see A.D.Norris writing such nonsense as for example, that evolution cannot account for "our fallen state," as if our fallen state were a scientific fact which could be established by experiment or analysis of our flesh, instead of a purely legal relationship to God; or even worse yet, "It is our fallen race which lusts, and envies and slays in anger and with guile." He says man is the only sinning animal, overlooking that he himself believes in a walking and talking serpent which was more guileful even than Eve, otherwise presumably he could not have seduced her. He also overlooks that Eve lusted after the forbidden fruit before the fall which he supposes implanted in her the capacity to lust! It is a very feeble kind of science which cannot see the fallacy of attributing an anterior effect to a posterior cause. Two other things he fails to take account of; although Cain was a murderer, Abel too was born in "this fallen state" and he was righteous. How was this? Jesus also, of identical nature with us, neither envied nor slew in anger nor was guile found in His mouth. It might be a better mark of his own proper humility if he recognized and confessed his awful error in affirming that after Jesus died the devil hung there dead and that His death was the only means of escape from temptation. One is nauseated when reading such stuff and only the present indications that it will be impossible to smother the fire and that some of the thorns will be burned out give a gleam of hope.

Almost exactly twenty-two years ago I wrote and circulated a letter which is now reprinted below. It was treated with derision by some, though the comments passed suggested it had not always been read by those who criticized it. John Carter referred to it in "The Christadelphian" as the work of a renegade brother though he never made any attempt to answer it. I remember when I was interviewed by two brethren delegated for the duty, one (the late H.W.Warre) said that he himself believed that what I had written was the truth but that Christadelphians would never be able to accept it because of the Statement of Faith. The other, L.C.Jennings, said he did not know and did not want to know anything about it. However, on their report the Managing Brethren of the Suffolk St. Ecclesia decided I should be disfellowshipped but were craven enough to lie about the reason, refusing me an opportunity to explain. Now that they are united with the Central Fellowship and represented by The "Christadelphian" the surviving member of that delegation and his associates will have an opportunity soon to learn what it is all about and decide whether they can agree with what I wrote then, seeing it has now been endorsed in the vital particular by L.G.Sargent, or whether they will persist in the ignorant prejudice which actuated them then.

This then is what I wrote in April 1943, under the heading – “To all sincere followers of Christ amongst Christadelphians:

Dear Brother or Sister, For some years past a number of pamphlets have been in circulation amongst us, setting forth views of certain doctrines which are different in important features from those generally held. No doubt many of you have read them with the care and attention which is due to any sincere and brotherly effort to enlighten and help towards a better understanding of the plan whereby God is separating a people for His Name.

After a long and careful consideration and prayer for guidance, we have come to the conclusion that the reasoning and arguments presented are based upon the word of God, and are therefore unanswerable. As a result, on January 18th, 1943, together with others of the same mind, we were baptized, with a fuller and more perfect understanding, into the things concerning the Kingdom and the Name.

Out of a sincere love and earnest desire to serve those with whom we have worked and associated for many years, we are writing to explain, as briefly and simply as possible, the grounds for the action taken, and we hope that even if you do not see things in exactly the same light, you will at any rate give the matter careful thought.

You may or may not be aware that the generally accepted basis of belief commits us to the theory that the result of the disobedience in Eden was that Adam's nature was changed, “By the implantation of a physical law of decay which works out dissolution and death, etc.,” and that his natural death, which occurred 930 years later, was the sentence of death carried into effect. Now, although there is not the least evidence to prove this theory, if it went no further one might reasonably pass it over as a possible explanation; but it is then argued that in order to redeem man from this changed condition, God sent His Son into the world, bearing the same condemned or sin-defiled nature, to suffer a representative death and by His sinless character “condemn sin in the flesh.” It is then reasoned that it was in order that He might have the strength to overcome the “tendency in the direction of sin” with which all men are said to be born, that Jesus was begotten of God. Apart from the fact that there appears to be no Scripture to support any of these conclusions, there are at least three very serious and far-reaching objections to the whole theory:-

1) If natural death was the penalty inflicted by God as the punishment for disobedience, in other words, “the wages of sin,” what did the sacrifice of our Saviour accomplish, since Adam and most other men suffer that penalty?

2) If Jesus bore a condemned nature which made His death inevitable, how could His sacrifice be a redemption? He said of His life, “No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself.”

3) If Jesus received from His Father, by reason of His birth, power to overcome temptation which other men do not receive, where is the virtue of His triumph over sin and the justice of God in holding us guilty when we fail?

It will be readily seen that these questions involve the central and most fundamental principles of the plan of God, but they have been put to capable brethren in both fellow-ships and they are unable to answer them except to say that it is God's design and we cannot expect to comprehend it. With all reverence and humility we suggest that this is a strange reversal of the words of the Saviour Himself that God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent but has revealed them unto babes.

Believing now that they are capable of clear and simple explanation, which neither impugns the justice of God nor casts doubts upon the purity of our Saviour and the sublime unselfishness

of His sacrifice, let us look again at the Scriptural account, and without seeking to bolster up any preconceived notions “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls.”

Our first parents were created living souls and placed in Eden under a law, to which God attached the penalty “in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” The plain sense of this expression is that in the very day they disobeyed, they would be put to death, and other scriptural examples of the use of the same phrase would also lead us to this conclusion. We are told of the transgression, but we do not read of the infliction of the penalty. Instead, we learn that God gave Eve, not Adam, the promise of a seed who should destroy the power of sin, and He clothed them with skins, which necessarily involved the killing of animals. He further placed them under the effects of a curse upon the ground, which marked His displeasure and put them in a setting in which they could develop character. No doubt until they saw the slaying of the innocent creatures with whose skins they were covered, they knew nothing of death, but when they saw life taken, they would realize that this was what was justly due to them for their disobedience.

It seems very plain therefore that the death penalty was suffered by the animals instead of by them and that they escaped it by recognizing the sacrificial principle that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. It is evident also that if the Almighty had inflicted the penalty in Eden, the race would have perished with Adam and Eve. Is not the love and mercy of God, therefore, most perfectly seen here in the very beginning, when He Himself provided them with a typical covering of righteousness, and showed in type how He would provide a Lamb which would take away the evil consequences of their disobedience. Thus it is to the mercy of God, “because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God,” that we owe our very existence; and it is to that same mercy and love, foreshadowed in the typical sacrifice which was slain instead of our first parents, that we owe the possibility of redemption through Jesus Christ, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

What is usually understood to be the actual sentence, “till thou return unto the ground, for dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return,” really refers simply to the natural end of a natural life and merely sets a limit to the period of a second probation. If natural death be the inescapable effect of sin as “a fixed principle of the flesh,” how did Enoch and Elijah escape it, and why will those who are “alive and remain until His coming” not suffer it? Dr. Thomas in *Elpis Israel*, page 65, admits that we have no reason to suppose that Adam would not have died even had he not been disobedient, since he was no more than a natural creation out of the dust, like every other living creature. Animals are not mortal because of sin; they die because they are of a corruptible nature with a limited span of life.

The difference in Adam’s state before and after the fall lay in his relationship to his Creator. His disobedience alienated him and brought him under condemnation to death; he had become legally dead; “dead while he lived;” and thus it is that we who are his descendants, upon coming to an understanding of the Truth, find ourselves in the Adamic relationship, “dead in trespasses and sins,” even though we are physically alive. We can see no grounds therefore for the assumption that the physical nature of man was in any way changed. The whole scheme is one concerned with moral character, relationship, and law, and the importance of this will be seen from what follows.

This explanation disposes of what many see to be a profound difficulty in the understanding of God’s plan common to both Christadelphian and Orthodoxy, that is, how it can be just, that the unenlightened person, the ignorant savage and the innocent babes should inherit the result of Adam’s sin and, worse still, suffer the penalty of death. Natural death is not the wages of sin, it is simply the natural end of a corruptible or earthy nature. In effect, those who are in ignorance have in a doctrinal sense, no more relationship to Adam than they have to Christ. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world” and until people hear the Gospel call they are

not under condemnation because they are not enlightened. "Where there is no law there is no sin." God does not punish people who sin in ignorance. The principle is exactly the same as that expressed by Paul in regard to the Mosaic Law, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived (or came to life) and I died."

Adam then is the federal head of the human race, and for the purposes of His plan, God regards all men as "in Adam," and it is in this sense that "by one man's disobedience sin entered into the world and death by sin." Our own individual experience proves that God is entirely just in concluding all under the first sin in this way, since we all disobey, but it is the sin of Adam which must be atoned for since it was that which brought the condemnation. How could it be done? It is certain that neither Adam nor any other could do it by obedience to a law or by good works, for "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," and again, "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;" and it is equally impossible for Adam or any of his children to do it, for all are in the same bondage. Hence we read, "No man can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him." As an honoured brother has phrased it, "Profoundest problem - most glorious solution."

The condemnation being entirely a legal position and not a physical condition, if Jesus had been a son of Adam like us, He would inevitably have been in the same bondage as ourselves, and His perfect obedience could not have delivered even Himself. But the beauty and harmony of the solution is seen in the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, and therefore in a position to take upon Himself the penalty due to Adam, and actually pay the debt which Adam incurred when he sold himself and all "in him" into bondage. His own life in place of Adam's was the price which Jesus paid to buy us back for God. In exactly the same sense as all are dead in Adam, as the federal head of the alien state, so all in Christ, as the head of the new creation, are alive. This is unquestionably the reason why Jesus was begotten of God. The pitiful arguments and divisions of the past as to the nature of His flesh, the proportions of humanity and divinity in Him, or the strength to resist temptation with which His paternity endowed Him, all merely show the confusion in the minds of those concerned. And these misconceptions are still embedded in Christadelphian literature and in spite of their lack of scriptural foundation and their bad logic, are still held and taught by large sections of the community.

Jesus was the seed of the woman, through the line of Abraham and David, but the Son of God, not of Adam, and therefore not, like us, born in bondage to sin. There can be no doubt that He was of one flesh with us, and that He was tempted in all points as we are, being thus born of a woman, but since He was the Son of God and it is testified of Him that He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, where is the one who dare say that His life was forfeit, that He was Himself in need of redemption or that He was the first to benefit by His own sacrifice? Yet that is the terrible position to which we have lately realized we were committed by the efforts of brethren in the past to justify the false assumptions used to explain the fall of man. Was it on our account that the Apostle was led to write, "No man, speaking by the spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed."?

"But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." When these or any other of the wealth of passages expressing the same glorious truth are produced, and we ask, "if natural death is the wages of sin, what did our Saviour save us from and how can our sins be said to be forgiven?," we are told that His sacrifice made resurrection and eternal life possible. The answer of Scripture is that eternal life is the free gift of God; it is neither purchased for us nor by us. But it is made possible to us by Christ, for unless He had voluntarily laid down His life to redeem us from the bondage to sin, we should have died in sin, with Adam, and it would have been impossible for us to receive from God His willing forgiveness and the precious gift, because by His own just law the grave would have claimed us eternally. Thus God is seen to be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Years of experience amongst you have convinced us that it is impossible to explain the way in which God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, on the principles which we believe can be only nominally accepted by many of you. Furthermore, it seems likely to us that the ambiguity and lack of care we have shown in discovering and expounding this vital element of the One Faith is the explanation of the disastrous declension which is becoming increasingly manifest amongst Christadelphians. How many realise that they have practically ceased to preach the sacrifice of Christ? The return, the resurrection, the Kingdom, yes, but what are these without The Atonement? The Apostle said, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." We who should be carrying on his labours have buried the key of knowledge under a drift of unfounded theories and assumptions and now appear to know anything and everything but that most important fact of all, "that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." And is not the coldness often charged against the Christadelphian religion traceable to this same cause, a philosophic theory which has robbed the Love of God in Christ of its most wonderful expression, for "He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him was no sin. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us."

Dear Brother, and Sister, it is realised that there are many amongst you who would not attempt to defend the assertion that our loving Saviour was under condemnation, or needed redemption, but is it possible to swim against the tide of accepted theory and tradition? It seems a small thing, beside what Jesus has done for us, in bearing Himself the pangs of the death due to us as sinners, to openly testify that we find no fault in Him and to acquit Him of deception when He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep," and to frankly confess that "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

There are many other thoughts we would like to express, but these should serve to explain the course we have taken and we trust you will consider them with the care which befits a matter of such moment to us all. If any wish for further information or help, we are ready and anxious in a humble and loving spirit, to reason together. We will answer all letters of enquiry to the best of our ability, and our home is open and a welcome awaits every one of those who love His appearing.

May God Bless and guide us all into all truth.

Yours sincerely, E.BRADY.

I thought when I wrote it that this was a reasonable letter and still think so, though one might put some things a little differently today. I was astonished at the hostility it met with in some quarters and the indifference in others - neither seemed to be what one would expect from Brethren in Christ - and sometimes I wondered if it was myself that was queer, but as hardly anyone attempted to reply and certainly no one succeeded in showing it to be either unscriptural or illogical, I saw no reason to abandon the hope that sooner or later truth would prevail or I should learn better. Probably had I realised the weight of prejudice and blind ignorance which had to be broken down I should never have made the attempt, even though I had had a good indication of it in the interview mentioned. Since then, however, I have written sixteen pamphlets and sundry leaflets dealing with various aspects of this great subject, comparing the surpassing beauty, logic and simplicity of the true Gospel with the labyrinths of unreason into which Christadelphian writers will go rather than confess themselves in error or their foundation unsound. The evidence goes to show that in spite of the inevitable antagonism aroused by what sometimes necessarily had the appearance of a personal attack, they have been closely studied by the leaders and although the unashamed advice from A.B.s to their members was to burn them unread, they appear to have been passed around, often almost illicitly, and their sound reasoning has made its impact. The scrupulous avoidance of any public mention or any attempt to deal with them in the magazines has not been unobserved and the obvious conclusions drawn.

I feel now, after the admission in "The Christadelphian" that "it was not human nature which was held under judgment and condemned," that the task imposed upon me by the convictions to which I was led by the work of Edward Turney and the late F.J.Pearce is finished. This was the realisation I started from and this was the thing which prevented Christadelphians from understanding the true meaning and purpose of the wonderful sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I shall not need to write any more pamphlets and letters to my former brethren - the crisis has been reached and must now be worked out for good or ill by those whose responsibility it is. I pray that the outcome will be to the glory of God, the honour of His Son, our loving Saviour and the vindication of His holy Word

Ernest Brady.
April 1965.