

Recognition - By Whom?

“Who supps with the Devil must take a long spoon.”

When we first heard talk of “recognition” we took it upon ourselves to remind some members of the Suffolk Street Fellowship of this old saying and to warn them that while reunion might appear for various reasons very desirable, the price of attaining it would almost certainly be more than they were expecting to pay.

We pointed out that, in placing themselves under the yoke of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, as they would do if they accepted the basis proposed by the committees, they would surrender that freedom of action and conscience which was the real concern of the brethren who resisted the autocracy of Robert Roberts 80 years ago.

When Cyril Cooper embarked upon discussion with John Carter he would hardly have anticipated that the time would come when he would be signatory to a letter to Australia advocating those very processes of heresy-hunting and excommunication against which his own brethren have protested for years. We think it very unlikely that he had much voice in the composition of the letter to the Adelaide Conference which appears in the July Christadelphian, and still less that he has any personal knowledge of the brethren against whom it is directed, but it is sad in the extreme to see him lending himself as a cat’s-paw to further the design of a minority in Australia to eliminate good liberal-minded Christian brethren like A.R.D.Moye and his associates and clamp down on them the same hypocritical iron-curtain as exists here. This is the first instalment on the account which he will have to pay for putting expediency before principle. It will not be the last: before very long he will be presented with the bill in respect of brethren nearer home whose conscience will not allow them to accede to the unjustifiable and unscriptural clauses of the Statement of faith. It is probable that Cyril Cooper is too busy with details of procedure to be able to give much time to thought and reading, or he would surely be aware of the fact that the document he is being required to force upon his brethren both here and abroad as the price of recognition, is thoroughly discredited and in the end will inevitably produce far more strife and contention than he and his committee were hoping to remove. The spoon that is long enough to enable any intelligent Bible student to make a meal of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith has yet to be discovered!

The letter is well intentioned no doubt, and the joint signatories write some good, though obvious things about the duty of promoting unity, to which none could object. But how are we to reconcile these with the declared purpose of the letter, which is to induce the Australian Ecclesias to cast out of their fellowship those whose intelligence will not suffer them to swallow “sin-in-the-flesh” and whose honesty will not permit them to conceal the fact? They say “we must avoid things that make for disunity, contentions and strifes of words, but we also have a duty to protest against error.” Very good! But have not others also a duty to protest against error? It amounts to this; when these two editors advocate things which make for disunity they are only carrying out their duty of protesting against error, but when brethren in Australia, or ourselves or anyone else, protest against what we deem to be error that is to be guilty of contention, strife about words and causing disunity! They are certainly very ready to pull out the mote and overlook the beam. The real question is, what is to be the test of what is the truth and what the error - is it the B.A.S.of F. or is it the Word of God? If they can claim a duty to protest against error they ought not to deny others the right - or are they, as editors, beyond the possibility of error? In the words of Oliver Cromwell, “Is it therefore infallibly agreeable to the word of God, all that you say? I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ; think it possible you may be mistaken.”

They say,

“The citation of utterances such as that the Statement of faith contains blasphemous assertions, by brethren in Australia create great difficulties for them.”

They need not go so far as Australia to find those who will affirm that substantial portions of it amount to blasphemy. The writer in “The Truth About Clean Flesh” has produced ample evidence in proof and in “The Addendum” appended to the letter, which it is the principle purpose of this article to examine, there are clear indications that its author was consciously and carefully scrubbing round the dirty patches. The composition bears the stamp of the hand of John Carter and it is therefore as instructive for what it omits as for what it says.

In the body of the letter and referring to “The Addendum” they say

“We attach an attempt to state in simple straight language what we think those clauses (5 and 12) mean.”

This is an artless announcement and while we may commend their candour we may well wonder what those die-hard followers of men like P.O.Barnard will make of it. If the Statement of Faith is, as they affirm earlier in the letter (page 269, col.2)

“acknowledged by both Central and Suffolk Street groups of ecclesias as the one to which all could subscribe as setting out the first principles of the One Faith,”

why is there the need for “an attempt” to state “in simple straight language” what John Carter and Cyril Cooper “think” those clauses mean? Does not the fact that they feel the need to make such an attempt prove that the Statement of Faith is not what it purports to be? If it is to be made the test by which brethren both here and in Australia are to be retained in or cast out of fellowship, ought it not itself to state its meaning in simple straight language? This is indeed the most staggering exhibition of dialectic nakedness which any pair of editors can ever have put their names to. Does not the very fact that they can do no better than put down “what they think” certain clauses mean, invalidate their claim that it is accepted here as setting out the First Principles of the One Faith? The truth of the matter is that a large majority do not even know what it contains, far less understand it; and who can blame them when men of the status of John Carter and Cyril Cooper can only make an attempt to state what they think it means. Should they not allow their brothers in Australia to state what they think too? The B.A.S.of F. claims to be a set of definitions of the doctrines of Scripture; if we are now to have another set of definitions of those definitions perhaps in time we may get another – an addendum to the addendum in fact! And who is then to say which is to be used as the instrument of Excommunication, the Statement of Faith, the Addendum thereto - or some further attempt by these editors to say what they think it means?

But what a shocking foundation on which to send forth across the world an exhortation “to remove from your association - sad though it may be to have to do it” those brethren who think contrary to John Carter and his aide, that it is blasphemous to affirm that the Son of God inherited condemnation and was required to die for His own salvation. The day will come – sad though it may be to have to say it - when such foolish leaders will stand ashamed before the One they so dishonour.

THE ADDENDUM

In the course of the letter we are told,

“We must eschew slick labels which are easily used but often do not truly define. Clichés of speech are full of dangers.”

This is a very admirable sentiment and everyone would have welcomed an explanation in the promised simple straight language. But what do we find? The clarity and simplicity is confined to those points which are nowhere in dispute. Where clarification and precision was wanted we find nothing but old Christadelphianisms and ambiguities; phrases which are certainly very familiar but which when analysed throw no light on the matters with which they deal. It has obviously been drawn up with the greatest care but its purpose is transparently evident – to gloss over the objectionable clauses of the Statement of Faith and while not actually reaffirming them to avoid jettisoning them altogether. It is because it is impossible to do this in the “simple straight language” they promise, that we find it is in fact no more than the usual woolly stuff to which those must always resort who find that the doctrines to which they are committed will not stand putting into plain English.

In order to give them the fair deal which they have never felt able to give us, we are reproducing The Addendum in full, drawing attention to what we consider to be its defects by our comments alongside. To facilitate later references we have inserted numerals, otherwise it is verbatim.

<u>The Addendum</u>	<u>Our Comments</u>
1 We believe that Adam was made of the earth and declared to be very good;	Full marks for this; it is very true and scriptural
2 because of disobedience to God’s law he was sentenced to return to the dust.	Here we disagree. He incurred the penalty of death but did not suffer it. The return to the dust was the natural end of a corruptible creature.
3 He fell from his very good state...	Where is the evidence? Is not this a cliché?
4 and suffered the consequences of sin – shame, a defiled conscience...	True.
5 and mortality	The term mortality is ambiguous; see what Dr Thomas said (below). Corruptibility is not the penalty of sin.
6 As his descendants we partake of that mortality that came by sin.	Again – mortality is an ambiguous term. As his descendants we are corruptible creatures, but not because of sin.
7. and inherit a nature prone to sin	Where is the proof? If Adam could sin while very good, why not us? Why should the fact that we also sin be supposed to prove that we inherit a sinful Nature?
8. By our own actions we become sinners	Only partly true. Apart from anything else we may do, we are constituted sinners by law (Romans 5:18,19).
9. and stand in need of forgiveness of sins before we can be acceptable to God.	True; but it is not primarily our own sinful actions which make us unacceptable to God but the fact that we are in a state of alienation.
10. Forgiveness and reconciliation God has provided by the offering of His Son;	True; but these are two distinct things and reconciliation must come before forgiveness
11. though Son of God, He partook of the	Agreed. But does not this fact conflict with 7? If He

<p>same nature – the same flesh and blood – as all of us, but did no sin.</p> <p>12. In His death He voluntarily declared God’s righteousness</p> <p>13. God was honoured and the flesh shown to be by divine appointment rightly related to death.</p> <p>14. To share in God’s forgiveness we must be united with Christ by baptism into His death, rising from baptism dead to the past to walk in newness of life.</p> <p>15. The form of baptism is a token of burial and of resurrection.</p> <p>16. ...and in submitting to it we identify ourselves with the principles established in the death of Jesus “who died unto sin.”</p> <p>17. ...recognising that God is righteous in decreeing that the wages of sin is death.</p> <p>18. ...and that as members of the race we are rightly related to a dispensation of death.</p> <p>19. In all His appointments God wills to be honoured, sanctified and hallowed by all who approach unto Him.</p> <p>20. By His promises God sets before man a hope of life and a prospect of resuming those relationships that are lost by sin.</p> <p>21. With the setting forth of this hope there comes a new basis of responsibility.</p> <p>22. Times of ignorance God overlooks...</p>	<p>had the same nature as us and yet did no sin how can that nature be prone to sin?</p> <p>How could it declare God’s righteousness to require the death of one who did no sin, because of His nature? Such a requirement would rather declare God to be unrighteous. It sounds well, but what does it convey?</p> <p>A perfect specimen of Christadelphian cliché! What does “related to death” really convey? What is meant by “the flesh”? God created flesh in the beginning in the form of a man who was capable either of good or evil. There is no evidence that the flesh today is any different from Adam’s flesh before he sinned.</p> <p>We agree; but this conflicts with the Christadelphian view that one who is in Christ is still in Adam.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>To quote the words “who died unto sin” is nothing more than a cliché; it conveys nothing what-ever. See below.</p> <p>God is indeed righteous in so decreeing; but if God had required the death of His Son in order to establish the fact, He would rather have shown Himself unrighteous, for He said, “The soul that sinneth shall die” – not “the soul that is sinful flesh shall die.”</p> <p>“Dispensation of death” is a well worn phrase but is it not one of those “slick labels” which are easily used but do not truly define? As members of the race we are corruptible, but this has nothing to do with the wages of sin.</p> <p>True; but does it not dishonoured God to affirm that the flesh He created very good He has now changed to very bad flesh full of sin?</p> <p>True; the hope of life is a prospect but the relationship “sons of God” for the believer is a present reality.</p> <p>Partly true, but why a new basis of responsibility? Has not the basis for responsibility always been the same – knowledge? Was not this the basis laid down in Eden?</p> <p>If mortality is indeed the penalty of sin then God has not overlooked the times of ignorance! The ignorant and irresponsible of all ages have suffered for sin!</p>
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23. But with knowledge a man becomes accountable and responsible creatures with the obligation to believe and obey God.

On the supposition set forth in point 18 that we die because we sin, when a man becomes so accountable, on what just basis could God inflict additional punishment?

That concludes the “Addendum” and our comments, which will now be slightly expanded. We have quoted it in full because as an “attempt to state in plain straight language” what the signatories think those clause (5,7,12 etc.) mean it is more remarkable for what it leaves out than for what it contains.

It is certainly very much less offensive in its phraseology than the B.A.S.F. but let no one make the mistake of thinking that they will be permitted to substitute this very much milder statement for the official one drawn up by R. Roberts. If any of the die-hards complain of its omissions they will be told it is only an attempt to state what they think certain clauses mean. If any thoughtful person quotes it as saying nothing about sin-in-the-flesh and asks why acceptance of that doctrine should be required of him, he will be directed to the portions numbered 3 and 7 above which subtly wrap up the idea. Or again, if one were to cite this addendum as justification for eschewing the shameful affirmation in the B.A.S.F. that Christ had to die for Himself, he will instantly be directed to the sentence marked 16 where four words of Scripture are cunningly inserted in order that the authors may avoid committing themselves in plain straight language to the doctrine that Christ was under condemnation and therefore he was defiled and His death required because of His nature, while at the same time they will be able to claim that their addendum is in harmony with the Statement of faith. It will avail nothing to point out that to use a phrase of Scripture in this way, out of context and without either explanation or the apostle’s argument, is to be guilty of the worst kind of cliché-mongering.

This is the little pot that contains all the poison. Lift the lid and out will come pouring all the foul spirits which have possessed men like P.O.Barnard in Australia when he has written things like the following;

“Man is a diseased abnormality because of sin” - and

“the serpent power of sin introduced its venom into the flesh of Christ;”

or A.D.Norris in England when he has declared the Christadelphian belief that when the Saviour was put to death

“the devil hung there dead”

on the Cross; and W.F.Barling when he has asserted that there was no injustice in the death of Christ; that the Diabolos was actually in His flesh and that it was just and right for Him to have to die. If all these and more than a few parallel utterances are not the most dreadful of blasphemies we must be incapable of understanding the meaning of “plain straight language.”

In considering the question whether John Carter and Cyril Cooper are to be trusted in their judgment as to the meaning of disputed clauses or to be followed as teachers of Scripture, let us assume that their interpretation of the Statement of Faith is correct. Look again at the portion dealing with the consequences of sin (4 and 5). They say Adam experienced shame, a defiled conscience and mortality. We agree he was ashamed and conscience-stricken - but what of mortality? By mortality they mean subjection to natural death - or better, corruptibility. The question we ask is, Was this which they call mortality one of the consequences of sin? In our view the Scripture (Genesis 3:14-24) does not so state. It says that Adam was to suffer certain consequences “all the days of his life” until he returned to the ground from which he was taken; it does not say he was to return to the ground

because he had sinned, but because he was of the dust. It is not to be inferred that had he not sinned he necessarily would have lived for ever! "For dust thou art" tells us what he was, both before he sinned and after, while "and unto dust shalt thou return" tells us how his second probationary period would be terminated.

It is freely admitted that the verse just quoted has always been accepted - not only by Christadelphians, but almost universally by Christians - as meaning that natural death came into the world as the result of Adam's sin. The question is, is that almost universally-held belief right or wrong? It is hardly necessary to remind our readers that there are several other beliefs which are quite as widely accepted which are utterly unfounded and we suggest that this idea that natural corruptibility was caused by Adam's disobedience ought to be classed with them.

Since, however, it is laid down in the Statement of Faith, and is now reaffirmed in The Addendum under such authoritative signatures; our suggestion alone will probably not carry much weight. Fortunately, we can offer in evidence the opinions of others more highly regarded by those for whom we write. Here is an extract from Elpis Israel (page 65):-

"It is probable that Adam and Eve would have died after a long time if no further change had been operated upon their nature... The animal nature will sooner or later dissolve. It was not constituted so as to continue in life for ever, independent of any further modification. We may admit, there-fore, the corruptibility, and consequent mortality of their nature, without saying they were mortal... In this sense, therefore, I say, that in their noviciate, Adam and his betrothed had a nature capable of corruption..."

So if Dr Thomas could admit the corruptibility and consequent mortality of Adam and Eve in their noviciate how is it that in The Addendum mortality is stated to be the result of sin? Do not ask the writer to account for the virtual contradiction in the passage quoted or with conflicting statements in other contexts. This is a task to which John Carter and Cyril Cooper should address themselves, since they affirm in The Addendum a thing which Dr Thomas confounds completely. It is simply produced to show the fundamental unsoundness of the Christadelphian position revealed by the attempt to state in simple language what they think it means.

Not only Dr Thomas but also Robert Roberts made statements which effectually explode the theory that natural death is the penalty of sin. Under the heading, "Man's state after creation," he wrote,

"He (Adam) was a living soul or natural body of life, maintained in being by the action of the air through the lungs like us... would he have died if left alone, unchanged in that state, if he had not sinned? Who can tell? The testimony is that death came by sin; but the fact also is that, not being a spiritual body, he was presumably not immortal. Are we going to insist upon an opinion, on a point like this, about which no man can be certain? We shall act unwarrantably if we do so."

Some correspondents have queried the authenticity of some of the things we have quoted from the works of Dr Thomas and R. Roberts but to the best of our knowledge we have never misquoted or misapplied anything. So far as the above two extracts are concerned, however, they were both reproduced in The Christadelphian in March 1955, so that their authenticity will hardly be challenged.

That from Dr Thomas is more than enough to prove the stupidity of the authors of The Addendum in trying to batten down Clause 5 on intelligent Australians; but the words of Robert Roberts are really remarkable. He asks, would Adam have died if he had not sinned? and he replies, "Who can tell?" Evidently J.C. and C.C. think they can tell because they have put it down so in their Addendum (point 5). He asks, "Are we going to insist upon an opinion, on a point like this?" It is evident that the authors of The Addendum are, because they are asking the Australian brethren to

disfellowship anyone who will not assent to their “opinion.” They are doing exactly what R. Roberts speaks of – “acting unwarrantably.”

If, when Robert Roberts wrote; “The testimony is that death came by sin,” he had stopped to ask himself “what death is meant here?” he might have saved himself and his followers, and also this writer, much mental tribulation. The simple answer to the question is that the death most closely associated with the sin in Eden was the death of the animals with whose skins Adam and Eve were clothed and it is surely a reasonable inference that these deaths were sacrificial - death inflicted by bloodshedding - and were in fact substitutionary, like the animal slain instead of Isaac. If this were so, and some of us have no doubt at all that it was so, it throws a flood of light on the whole record and it is seen that mercy and salvation commenced with Adam and his wife and that although in his redeemed state he is the federal head of the body of sinners condemned to an eternal death he was himself the first subject of redemption.

Returning now to The Addendum; note the complete lack of cogency between point 5 and point 7. There is not the slightest attempt to demonstrate how the supposed inheritance of a nature prone to sin follows from the supposed partaking of the mortality which it is asserted came by sin. Furthermore, if Dr Thomas and R. Roberts were correct in the above extracts when they reasoned that man was corruptible when created they (the editors) cannot be right in (5) when they attribute mortality to sin, and neither can they be right in inferring that this results in a proneness to sin, since Adam sinned while he was still in the very good state. Whether or not they have succeeded in their attempt to state what they think the Statement of Faith means, they have amply succeeded in showing their inability to reason from simple Scriptural facts!

These comments upon an attempt which was never worthwhile and which is in any case a complete failure, will be concluded by what we think even these two editors would have found more rewarding - an attempt to give what the Word itself intends us to understand.

The Nazarene Faith

“Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”
Hebrews 11:6.

The expression “he that cometh to God” indicates a state of estrangement or alienation and we need to know how this came about and what it implies. The Apostle Paul says:-

“We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin.” Romans 3:9.

What does it mean to be “under sin” or to be alienated? It has nothing to do with our physical nature or our personal character; a person of the highest moral goodness is as much “under sin” as the worst sinner. In the beginning Adam was created of flesh and blood with the same corruptible nature as all other living creatures. He was placed under a law requiring obedience. He transgressed a simple command and thus incurred the penalty of sin. What actually followed and all other instances of the punishment of sin shows this was a judicial execution. Instead, God introduced the plan of redemption and by a typical sacrifice saved Adam, and by means of the federal principle opened to man the hope of regaining by faith that which had been lost by disobedience.

In Romans 5:19 Paul shows how God regards all men as involved in the sin of Adam; “By one man’s disobedience many were made (i.e., legally constituted) sinners.” The sentence of death incurred by Adam “passes upon” all his descendants, since all who have been born from him would have perished in him if he had in fact been put to death. He is thus appointed the federal head of all who are under the reign of sin and death and who, if they do not repent and obey the gospel will

receive sin's wages, an inflicted judicial death, at the Judgment. Sin is literally the transgression of law and those who have no understanding of God's purpose are not to be held accountable; but sin is also personified as a king or master to whom man is in servitude. The reason for this is given in Galatians 3:22; "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

The meaning of this is that God has appointed a second federal head, Jesus Christ, and the only way we can have the faith which is pleasing to God is by recognizing our relationship as an individual to these two federal heads and that we can choose to leave the bondage of the one and enter the service of the other.

The vital element in the Divine Plan is law. God's purpose is to show His love for man but He will not do so at the expense of the supremacy of law. Many believe that we are saved by a simple exercise of unconditional forgiveness, this would have shown mercy but it would not have upheld the principle of justice, law and right, which are absolute to God. They are met by the sacrifice of Christ. Under supreme law a sinner forfeits his life; the death which came by sin is not so much a punishment as a debt - he owes that which he cannot pay without perishing. If someone else could be found with the means to pay his debt and not perish, and providing the supreme arbiter sanctions the transaction, the sinner might be released from his debt without violation of the law.

When Jesus suffered death he made Himself the sin-bearer, He translated into reality the deliverance foreshadowed in Eden. He literally gave His life a ransom for many, paying with His own undeserved death the debt of the race, the life forfeited by Adam. His death was therefore substitutionary - not in the sense that the wrath of God was appeased by inflicting unmerited punishment on an innocent one in order that guilty ones might escape, as held by early theologians, but in the sense that when He submitted Himself voluntarily to the unjust condemnation of wicked men. Jesus was knowingly implementing the purpose of God to purchase mankind back from the bondage of sin by Himself paying the price of their release. Thus, by the full and exact discharge of its claims, the law was met and at the same time the love and mercy of God is wonderfully shown in and through the Lord Jesus Christ in that He was the redemptive Offering.

The Divine plan of salvation is unique; nothing like it ever happened before or will ever happen again. It has no parallel in the perfection with which its various factors fit together. The Bible shows that every descendant of Adam is born in bondage and the problem to which prophets searched diligently for an answer and which it says "angels desired to look into," - was how any member of the race could bring salvation, since no man could have the means in his possession to pay the ransom. This great mystery was solved by the Almighty in bringing His own Son into the world. Formed of a woman, He was the same natural flesh and blood as all other men, but since He was directly begotten by the overshadowing power of the Highest, He was born outside the prison and was therefore in a position to redeem or release those who were in captivity. Had He derived His life from Adam, through a human father, even though personally sinless it would have been impossible for His death to meet the legal claim of sin against the race. Being Son of God, and proving Himself obedient under trial, He was both legally and morally an example of the perfect man, and in that condition He both could and did, commend the love of God towards us in that while we were yet sinners, He died for us. Thus, on the federal principle of the many covered by the one, Christ died in the stead of Adam and us in him, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God and that we all might be one in Him.

It can hardly be too strongly emphasized that law is the basis of God's present dealings with man. When theologians inferred that the fall of man was a fall from a state in immaculacy to one of physical defilement, they took a road that has led them ever further from truth and towards that awful apostasy to be seen in the Roman Catholic system. The Statement of Faith and The Addendum at present under scrutiny is leading its adherents in that same direction. The fall of man was a legal matter; the physical consequences were only such as would face any disinherited son whose behaviour displeased his father so that he was cast out and came up against the realities of life for the first time. When God's law is disobeyed the transgressor's flesh does not change, any more than does

the flesh of one who disobeys a man made law. He puts himself outside the pale of God's family and becomes, in scriptural usage, a servant of sin. This is a matter of legal alienation. Natural death and corruptibility have nothing to do with it. The fact that a person may die, either by accident or by violence or by disease, will in no way alter his relationship. If during his life he heard the call of the gospel and responded, then his sleep of death will be terminated by an awakening to the eternal life conferred upon him during his probation. If on the other hand he received the call of the gospel and failed to obey it, then the same sleep will be ended by an awakening to shame and contempt, to suffer the death which is the wages of sin. This will be the literal and only physical result of our relationship to the purpose of God; we are either under the law of sin and death and will in due course reap the sinner's reward, or we die to that law in the symbol of baptism and come under the law of righteousness in Christ and in due time will receive the gift of life. Therefore, until the Day of Judgment, when the secrets of all human hearts are revealed, our standing in relation to these things is purely legal.

If this were understood it would open up a new world of meaning in some of the utterances of Jesus and the apostles; words which have been supposed to be prolepsis are in fact plain statements of present realities, as for example; "He that believeth is passed from death unto life" and "He that believeth shall never see death." The death which the believer shall never see is that death after judgment which is the wages of unbelief and which results in eternal destruction. The death from which the believer passes on coming from the water is that legal death-state which hangs over all except those in Christ.

Natural death is an altogether different matter. Time and chance happeneth to all, and if one's probationary period is ended before the return of Christ, such death is but the temporary cessation of an existence which will be renewed for eternity at His coming. This is the first resurrection, confined to those who belong to Christ and who will come forth from the grave immortal, glorious and incorruptible. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years."

The authors of The Addendum say that in all His appointments God will to be honoured, and to this we must agree. But we should wish to put some questions to John Carter and Cyril Cooper as to how well they have honoured Him. Does it honour God to affirm that the flesh He created very good He has since changed, by the implementation of a bias in the direction of sin, to very bad? In our opinion such a view does the exact opposite - it dishonours God. It is no help to say that man sinned and the change followed and therefore man alone must be blamed. Man could disobey God, but he could not change his nature or his flesh - not even the colour of his hair. If his nature was formerly very good and is now evil, only God could have changed it. Do you honour God by your assertion? In our opinion, to believe that because of one man's guilt, God has caused all his descendants to inherit a nature prone to sin is dishonouring to Him in the extreme. Israel had a proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge;" it was not a truth, but contained the same foolish misconceptions as your addendum. Do you sanctify the name of Yahweh when you insist that His only begotten Son was under condemnation because of His nature and bore the defilement of sin? In our opinion such a doctrine is an affront to heaven itself.

Supposing an earthly potentate acted in the manner implied by your beliefs: by his own design bringing about circumstances in which a miserable creature was faced by a task which it was utterly impossible for him to carry out and then when he failed inflicted punishment. There is little doubt that you would denounce such proceedings as an outrage and its perpetrator as vicious and unjust. Yet you dare to lay such injustice to the charge of the Almighty. Do you consider you honour God by attributing to Him such behaviour as in common justice you would reprobate in a human dictator? To talk about honouring God while putting forth your present views is cant and hypocrisy. If you saw even an ignorant dray-man whipping a horse which had fallen beneath a load which was too heavy for him to pull you would remonstrate; yet you do not scruple to charge your Creator with giving you a nature "prone to sin" and then with punishing you with death because you sin! Think again, brothers!

Dare to review your principles and ask yourselves if you have not fallen into a grievous and deadly error by confusing a legal principle, which can be rescinded by an act of mercy, with a physical condition which cannot.

Finally, as member of the Nazarene Fellowship, to whom the foregoing outline represents very briefly and imperfectly the message of the gospel, we would urgently and earnestly ask Christadelphians of every sort to give some thought to their position as members of a community whose creed affirms that the Holy One of God was born under condemnation and that the diabolos was literally in His flesh and blood; whose explanation of The Cross is that His flesh was obnoxious to God and had to be ritually destroyed and that therefore His death was for Himself. These are doctrines of devils and every sincere follower of His who hopes for acceptance at His return ought to renounce them. It is a good thing to be recognized by brethren - if they be indeed brethren - who have hitherto refused to do so; it will be a better thing to be recognized by the Lord and it will be a bad bargain if we lose the second to attain the first. It is a laudable aim to be reunited to brethren - if they deserve the name - from whom you have been estranged. It is better to be reunited to a God from whom you are still estranged, because you neither understand why you are estranged, nor what this estrangement consists in, nor why Jesus alone can restore you. And the pity of it is that hitherto you have not been prepared to listen to those who could tell you. Fortunately, apart from editors and leaders, who are constrained by the responsibilities they have accepted and therefore, perhaps to be pitied, there are not many who would dare to make these diabolical affirmations in cold blood, but the current movement for recognition or reunion upon the basis of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith is unquestionably fixing responsibility for them upon individual members and placing a millstone round the neck of the community, which will finally sink it into perdition.

Christadelphians are no longer unique in believing the Bible to be the Word of God, in preaching the return of Christ, the Resurrection and the Kingdom of God. In earlier years these were startling truths and marked off the few who understood them as true believers. But as one may learn from reading the newspapers, this is no longer the case; these truths are no longer the monopoly of one community but are being preached by a number of sects - one might almost say they are commonplace. It is no longer a test of faith to accept the Bible as the Word of God; we can quite justly regard as a fool anyone who does not realize that the researches of historians and archaeologists in recent years are sufficient to prove many times over that it is what it claims to be. Nor does it require any special perspicacity to see that the situation of the world today is such that the only solution is a supreme ruler such as Christ will be. And it is no hardship or trial of faith to be a Christian today. Any truly intelligent person, whatever his creed, could testify that religion, whether it be true or false, is the only possible resort and the situation of a believer in a prosperous community is, in this present evil world, the most comfortable, in fact almost the only sensible one. Surely, therefore, the question needs to be asked, are these things sufficient at this date, to constitute a person a saint? Any candid person must answer that they are not. Then what does? History is being repeated. The test that faced the Jewish nation in Christ's day was whether they could renounce their tradition and all it stood for, and accept Christ. We know how few of them could face it and we feel a sense of pity for them in the dilemma in which they found themselves; but that does not excuse their wilful blindness and hypocrisy. They were living in the last days of that dispensation and ought to have been alert to events. Christadelphians and a few others constitute the Israel of the latter day; well-versed in Scripture, well thought of by the world, a chosen people. These last days have put before them a final test and an effective one, not dissimilar to that which faced Jewry. A fundamental flaw in their long-cherished beliefs had become manifest. The ways of God were not just exactly what they had always thought. The Messiah not just what they had expected. Their interpretation of Moses and the Prophets was proving at fault. Much the same thing has happened in the Christadelphian world in its recent history. Similar issues are before your community today and there are not many who have the courage to look them in the face. Does the true Christ mean more than the community? Is love for Him and the truth about Him greater than loyalty to tradition? Can we put Him first? Dare we for the sake of His honour reject some of the things we have always been taught?

Many may be ignorant of the issue and there may be hope for them; but most are not. Some suspect that there is something wrong but close their ears and eyes for the sake of peace. Others have no sympathy with the errors we are concerned with but lack the courage to come out into the open. But the time has gone when they can be ignored. Every individual has a responsibility to the Lord Himself and it cannot be long before we shall be called upon to account to Him for our action, or lack of action, in matters which concern Him so intimately. If your leaders are so blindly obsessed with misconceptions which have long since been proved false, what prevents you seeking out those who are like-minded, bringing these questions to the issue before your ecclesias and compelling them to face them? Are you satisfied to be led like sheep to the slaughter?

You read with amazement, pity and sorrow of the things which Caiaphas and his followers did to Jesus. Do you realize what the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith does to Him? When you hear His voice saying, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends," do you reply, "One moment, dear Lord; you are under a slight misapprehension. You laid down your life for yourself. Your friends got the benefit certainly, but as you were in the same predicament yourself, your death was actually for yourself. You probably thought at the time you were giving yourself as a ransom for us, for you said so, but unfortunately the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith was not then available, otherwise you would have understood that you were as unclean as those you came to save; your very flesh obnoxious in the sight of your Father and therefore it had to be nailed to the Cross for your own salvation. You see, dear Saviour, we have to beware of the idea of substitution. Many people (you continue), even including some apostles, got the idea that you died instead of them, and as you know, this would be unthinkable. God could not justly punish you instead of them, so we had to find a reason for Him to punish you and us as well, and we managed to find this is a mistranslation of Paul's words in Romans 8:3 - "sinful flesh." You see, all flesh is unclean, even yours, and therefore it had to be ritually destroyed." If you heard the gentle reproof of the Master, "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," would you be tough enough to reply, "Not so, Lord; we know from the writings of our leaders, many of whom are highly intelligent men, some with university degrees, that human flesh is physically defiled with sin and therefore cannot be truly clean, not even yours, who was begotten of the Holy Spirit, and therefore there was no injustice in God condemning you to suffer a shameful death. It is proved by Clause 7 of the Statement of Faith that you were raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and therefore a sufferer in the days of your flesh from all the effects that came by Adam's transgression, including the death that passed upon all men, which you shared by partaking of their physical nature, and while what you say is very interesting, we have to accept this or we might be disfellowshipped."

Do these fancies strike you as too outrageous? Be assured that they fairly represent the position of all those who are suing for reunion or recognition on the basis of the Statement of faith. They are less preposterous than the fact that the benefits which give rise to them can have ever found their way into the doctrines of any Christian community which claims to honour God. Worse - that they are stated in black and white in a creed which professes to present in scripturally attested propositions the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Even more astounding is the fact that a couple of editors and a handful of a committee can apparently succeed, in 1956, in convincing a majority that reunion on such a basis is a good thing.

The question we ask you is this: "Whom do you wish to be recognized by?" It will be small comfort to have had the approval of this or that fellowship, if at the last we hear from the lips of the Lord the words, "I never knew you."

Ernest Brady.
1956