

“WHAT GOD HATH CLEANSED . . .”

THE TRUTH ABOUT CLEAN FLESH

BY

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Contents

FALSE ACCUSATION	PAGE 2
FACTS AND FICTIONS	PAGE 4
THE SEVEN UNCLEAN SPIRITS:-	
1. CHANGED NATURE	PAGE 8
2. DEATH BY SIN	PAGE 10
3. SIN-IN-THE-FLESH	PAGE 12
4. FOR HIMSELF	PAGE 15
5. GOD-MANIFESTATION	PAGE 17
6. MORTAL RESURRECTION	PAGE 20
7. UN-FORGIVENESS	PAGE 24
DOCTRINE OF DEVILS	PAGE 28
AMERICARTER	PAGE 34
LAST WORD	PAGE 38

What God Hath Cleansed

False Accusation

"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." Proverbs 18:13.

Learning not long ago that an address dealing with the so-called Clean Flesh Heresy was to be given to the Scotts Green ecclesia of the "Dawn" fellowship, the writer attended and was astounded to hear a Mr Shakespeare put forward an utterly false and misleading account of the beliefs of the Nazarene Fellowship.

He commenced by quoting from 1 John 4,

"Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of Antichrist;"

and he proceeded to lay against us the charge that we teach that the flesh of Jesus was different from the flesh of other men and therefore deny that he came in the flesh. It was abundantly clear that the speaker had never read any of the literature circulated by the Nazarene Fellowship nor had he any first-hand knowledge of what we believe, yet he had the impudence to stand up and attack us publicly and make these most serious and unfounded allegations.

We rose and protested against the speaker's misrepresentation and pointed out the futility of an attack which first attributes to the opponent a doctrine he does not hold and then proceeds to demolish it. Finally, somewhat grudgingly, he allowed that possibly this writer personally did not affirm there was any difference in Jesus' flesh but he stoutly maintained that his account of what the Clean Flesh Heresy consists in was correct. We challenged him to produce a scrap of evidence that anyone has ever suggested there was a difference between the flesh of Jesus and that of other men, but all we got was the round assertion "every body knows that that is what 'Clean Flesh' means."

It appears that there is in fact a very widespread misconception and it is the purpose of this book, among other things, to nail it down as lie. We shall show where it originated and why it has been sedulously cultivated for more than eighty years.

Let it be said at once, we accept the Apostles' word that anyone who denies that Jesus Christ came in the flesh would be an Antichrist, and if we did in fact believe or teach that the flesh of Jesus was different from ours we should deserve the opprobrium which Mr Shakespeare heaped upon us so unadvisedly; we should ourselves regard anyone who doubted the humanity of Jesus as practically certifiable; but the charge is as false as it is absurd.

It transpired that he had derived the information upon which his address was based from a booklet circulated by the "Dawn" Fellowship entitled "The Past 100 Years" by W.J.White, in which this same false accusation is made against Edward Turney. Someone present was kind enough to send me a copy; if this should meet his or her eye, I am grateful.

On page 4, "The First Declension - Clean Flesh" the author says, "We are referring of course to the heresy which has become known as Renunciationism." He affirms that Edward Turney taught that the nature of Jesus was different from others, but he gives no source, quotation or evidence or proof of his statement, so that it is evident that W.J.White's allegations are just as much a matter of "hearsay" as Shakespeare's. We have probably read more than most people of what Edward Turney wrote and said, and challenge anyone to find one word of his which by any stretch of imagination whatsoever could imply that he believed Jesus' flesh was different from other men's. His lecture is available in print and will be sent gratis to anyone who applies and a reward of £100 is promised to any person producing from it the evidence that its author denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

What Edward Turney did say was that there is a legal difference between Jesus and all other men, in the fact that His life came direct from God while all others are traceable back to Adam. He showed that there is no such thing as literal sin in human flesh, either in the flesh of Jesus or in the flesh of any other man, and it was his enemies who labelled his teaching "Clean Flesh" and started the false rumours that he believed that Jesus' flesh was superior to ours.

Robert Roberts was the man chiefly responsible for the almost complete misunderstanding current even today, and while we must recognize his outstanding character and achievements, it is evident that these were offset by some grave faults, not the least of which was his intolerance. It is probable that W.J.White has simply accepted without question the statement in "The Slain Lamb," page 3, that Edward Turney believed "that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh. They renounce the doctrine that he was the Son of Man."

If this had been the truth, the present writer would not be spending his strength to defend him or it; he would be in complete agreement with those who look on him as a heretic. But it is utterly and completely false. Neither he nor we ever affirmed that Jesus did not come in the flesh. Neither he nor we have ever renounced the doctrine that He was the Son of Man.

It is not however a very good principle in a writer or a speaker to derive his information concerning a person's position from his opponents or the unsupported testimony of his critics; even a criminal is allowed to be heard in his own defence. We could have had more respect for the author of "The Past 100 Years" if, before slandering one who has gone where he can no longer defend himself he had taken the trouble to read "The Sacrifice of Christ" and get to know just what he is up against. More especially, one could expect a writer of any judgment to be cautious of accepting Robert Roberts' statement on page 3 of "The Slain Lamb" that "they renounce the doctrine that he was the Son of Man." since on page 6 of the same work he says "The Renunciationist Heresy makes him a mere man."

How anyone could "deny that Jesus came in the flesh" and at the same time "make him a mere man" is rather difficult to understand, and before coming to the conclusion that there was some inexplicable complication in Edward Turney's teaching, the reader might consider whether the explanation of the contradiction was not Robert Roberts' determination at all costs to obscure the true issue. It was this; was the purpose of the Virgin Birth, to endow Jesus with special power to resist sin, or was it to produce a man who was legally in a position to make an offering for sin?

As Mr White says, this was the first division in the community and, like all divisions it is to be regretted. What is immeasurably more of a pity is that the majority were in the wrong and, (as we were informed recently in a letter from a Christadelphian of over 90 who actually remembers the events) had imposed upon them by the oppressive personality of Robert Roberts a doctrine which he himself had dismissed as imagination only shortly before.

The same correspondent also says, "Since reading "Too True to be New" I am satisfied Brother Brady that you have the truth and things which have puzzled me for over seventy years are now clear."

The truth of the matter is this; there is no difference between us as to the fact that Jesus did really come in actual flesh - the same human flesh as that of His mother and brothers and sisters and all other men. We believe this heartily and sincerely and so did Edward Turney and the publication of "The Past 100 Years" is a shame and a dishonour to its author and those responsible for its publication. To reject the belief that the flesh of Jesus was sinful is not to deny that He came in the flesh, for just as forcibly we reject the belief that we ourselves or even the most depraved sinner have sinful flesh. The question Edward Turney raised concerning Jesus was not a question of flesh but of the relation which He (Jesus) bore to the law of sin and death in contrast to that of all other men. Whether this is understood and accepted, or whether it is rejected depends upon the capacity and the conscience of the individual. It is a simple enough matter, and if men's minds had not been cluttered up with all the rubbish resulting from the idea that original sin is the cause of natural corruption little more would need to be said. It is, however, necessary to show how all aspects of the Gospel hinge upon it and that is why it is necessary to deal in detail with the beliefs and writings of those who hold it.

All we are concerned about is to remove the misunderstanding and enable people to have a fair look at the alternatives. They have a right and a duty to make up their own minds, and we make no complaint if after hearing both sides, the view we believe to be the right one is rejected. What we do complain of is seeing and hearing our beliefs either wilfully or ignorantly misrepresented so that people are not in a position to judge.

It has been a source of considerable comfort and a vindication of the good judgment of the average person when he has the true facts before him, that since the events referred to above nine members of the "Dawn" Fellowship have realized the hopelessness of the Christadelphian position and have been re-baptized into the true faith of Jesus Christ "who without spot offered himself to God." Hebrews 9:14.

Facts and Fictions

**"Now ye are clean through the word."
John 15:3.**

I often recall the mixture of astonishment and delight with which about a dozen years ago I first read "The Sacrifice of Christ." My first reaction was amazement that so demonstrably complete and satisfying an exposition of this superb theme had been given in a public lecture more than 70 years ago, and yet was known to so few.

There are not many sensations in life so thrilling as finding that there is a solution to what is reputedly an insoluble problem, and I imagined that all that was necessary would be to bring the matter to light, and everyone else would be as happy as I. How ingenuous I was! Perhaps some day I may write "The Autobiography of a Heretic" and recount the experiences of years when scarcely a day passed without its quota of reproach, vilification and occasional anonymous threats. I may tell of the private discussions and the public debates; of the suppression of fact by editors and misrepresentations by speakers; of machinations by members of one fellowship to involve me in controversy with another, and other such strange adventures. Such an account of how "brethren in Christ" react towards those who do no more than meet them with their own weapons, pointing out the contradictions in their faith and the inconsistencies in their position, would make an instructive but sickening story. Perhaps it is best forgotten.

Two things, however, stand out more and more with every year that passes. The first is how a correct understanding brings an ever-increasing appreciation of the simplicity and symmetrical beauty of God's purpose in appointing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world and an increasing thankfulness for the enlightenment to which we owe our association with it. Those who read what has been written under the heading "Unforgiveness" will readily understand why; no one who is living in dread of judgment can possibly be properly appreciative of what Jesus has done for them. The uncertainty of whether or no they may scrape through the ordeal visualized by some of the old writers saddles people with a nagging fear which actually discourages them from doing what they could to follow Him. The second is a constant sense of wonderment that under a bombardment of scriptural reasoning and appeals to commonsense; in the face of quotation from their own authorities and the complete failure of their defenders, third and fourth generation Christadelphians can be so deaf, blind and dumb.

The likeliest explanation was given at a recent Temperance Hall Fraternal Gathering when one innocent soul proudly claimed; "Christadelphians are a recognized religious sect with a place in the sun." If a place in the sun of this cosmos is a legitimate ambition for followers of Jesus, then Christadelphians are certainly to be congratulated. They do an immense amount of excellent social and charitable work and are bound together by a highly-developed organisation of publishing and financial interests which seems likely to ensure its continuance during any foreseeable future. But if the "heavenlies" that now are, are to be destroyed by the brightness of His coming and those who bask in the sunlight with them, it is surely high time for Christadelphians to ask themselves where they are going. When the Son of Man cometh there is even a doubt as to whether faith will be in the earth at all! There will almost certainly still be a popular and prosperous community of Christadelphians in their place in the sun. But is that the same thing?

In these circumstances one recalls the word picture in Luke 12 of an unclean spirit which, after being cast out of a man “Walketh through dry places seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out. And when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last case of that man is worse than the first.” This strange saying of Jesus is both more, and less, than a parable; there are different opinions as to its application and whether or not it can be fairly applied to the present condition of the Christadelphian house the reader must judge. Anyone who finds the cap fits will know where it should be worn. If on the other hand the reader sees some other meaning in Jesus’ words or feels that there is injustice in the writer’s application of them, the fact that they have served as a peg for the essays on seven aspects of doctrine which follow need not offend him.

It is very certain that in 1873 Edward Turney identified and dragged into the light of day the unclean spirit which has caused all the trouble in the history of the Truth. This was the doctrine of sinful flesh, or as the Church calls it, original sin, i.e., sin implanted in human flesh. It is equally certain that in the “Thirty-four scripturally attested propositions” drawn up by Robert Roberts in 1879 and called “A Statement of the One Faith” there are at least seven other unclean spirits even more wicked, which owe their tenancy to the presence of that first one. This had been expelled by Robert Roberts years before when he wrote the words: “Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatever... the presumption and evidence are entirely the contrary way. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation. The phrase sin in the flesh is metonymical. It is not expressive of a literal element or principle pervading the physical organisation. Literally sin is disobedience, or the act of rebellion.” This is unquestionably the truth and if Robert Roberts had maintained this position the subsequent history of Christadelphianism might have been quite different, for here was a candidate for baptism required to renounce a doctrine which later was incorporated in the Statement of Faith, and has ever since been regarded as a cardinal principle. It is difficult to understand why, after roundly condemning it as an error. Robert Roberts reinstated this wicked spirit; we may learn the reason one day. Possibly he realized that it was a flat contradiction of some of the things Dr. Thomas had said in *Elpis Israel* and he recanted out of a mistaken loyalty to him. Whatever the explanation of the mystery, the sad thing is that in the space of a few years the evil spirit which had been cast out was again in possession and a respectable tenant.

The purpose of the following seven sections will be to identify what are believed to be seven false aspects of Christadelphian teaching which are the direct and indirect results of the attempts to justify and establish the idea that sin became a literal element of human flesh.

Before proceeding however, one or two other matters are worth mention.

We have made reference to Robert Roberts’ treatment of Edward Turney, in “The Slain Lamb,” and in order to enable the reader to form an opinion as to the justice or otherwise of his charges we reproduce below an extract from Edward Turney’s lecture. In reading this bear in mind Robert Roberts’ words (page II): “I will endeavour to make manifest the most unscriptural, the most carnal, the most untrue and mischievous character of the new philosophy, with which it is now attempted to inoculate the brethren.”

From “The Sacrifice of Christ” page 46:

“Peter called the attention of his brethren to the fact that they were redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” 1 Peter 1:19.

The value of his blood lay in the fact of its spotlessness, that is, of its being undefiled by the sin of Adam; in other words, of its not being under sentence of death.

Has not this sentence, brethren, made us all sinners? Has not this sentence defiled the whole human race, in the sense of putting them under the sentence of death? Has not the sting of death been thrust into the heart of every son of Adam?

Whence then comes this mighty power to redeem, to ransom from the power of the grave? The answer is, Christ was not under penalty and could therefore, and did, “give his life a ransom for all.”

The blood itself was no better and no worse quality than your blood and mine, for God hath made of one blood all nations of men. Acts 17:2. It was, brethren, the precious "Life" wherein lay the exceeding, nay the "countless price."

Why is the death of God's saints (Psalm 116:15) precious in His sight? Because they have been redeemed by the blood of His Son from the curse. The death of the wicked is as nothing to Him; whole nations are counted as only the drop of a bucket.

Sufficient has been said, I think, to make it clear in what way Jesus redeemed us; to show that life had been lost through sin, and Jesus "gave His life" for all. You have not forgotten, of course, that I pointed out that Jesus by perfect obedience earned immortality. Now having seen how Christ hath redeemed us, let us enquire whether Christ needed to be redeemed, and in what way.

I answer that Jesus did not need to be redeemed. The sense, however, is that of being released, or saved from death; of being brought up again from the pit. Here Jehovah appears as the Great Redeemer, the Great Saviour, besides whom, strictly speaking, there is none else.

The power of Jesus to take His life again lay in "His right;" but it was God alone, the fountain of all power, who could bring Jesus again from the dead. As God is just, it was impossible that the bars of death should hold His Son, who had kept all His Father's commandments. It was not possible, says Peter, "that he should be holden of it." Acts 2:24. "When about to enter the chamber of the King of terrors," Jesus offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save him from death. Hebrews 5:7.

The sum, then, of what I have said is this; Christ redeemed us with the price of His own life. His Father redeemed or released Him without a price, because in Him was no sin.

That extract will serve as an example of Edward Turney's writing; there may be those like Robert Roberts who profess to be able to see something "most unscriptural, most carnal, most untrue and mischievous" in it but hitherto they have produced no evidence of it and the tactics of Robert Roberts in stating on one page that it makes Him a mere man and three pages later that it denies that He was Son of man will hardly carry conviction.

Its impact upon this writer was such as to make it impossible to remain as a member of a community whose fundamental doctrine is that Christ had to die to cleanse Himself from physical uncleanness.

Here some readers may deny that such a belief is a fundamental Christadelphian doctrine, or may disclaim it personally. We shall deal with this fully further on; here we can only advise them to read their Statement of Faith or almost any standard Christadelphian work; and in the section of this book "Doctrine of devils," the writer deals with some recent most shocking statements on the very point by A.D.Norris.

We have more than once been criticized and blamed for not maintaining our membership of the community and circumspectly propagating our views without causing division. We are aware that some have tried to follow such a course but it seems hardly consistent with the single-eyed honesty which a Christian ought to try to practice and what is more, to compromise with error to such an extent is likely to lead to a result the very reverse of what one would wish. As shown in "Too True to be New," the reunion between Suffolk Street and Crabtree Road ecclesias did not result in the truth being spread in the former, but in its extinguishment in the latter. Diplomacy and compromise may be very useful in political affairs or in negotiating reconciliation or recognition between groups or organizations where expediency and numerical strength mean more than a few lost ideals, but where revealed truth and religion is concerned there is only one right course, "Cry aloud and spare not," "Touch not the unclean," "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," "What communion hath light with darkness?" "Ye cannot serve the table of the Lord and of devils."

The fact is that belief in physical sin in the flesh and in natural death as the penalty of sin is so embedded in Christadelphianism and its roots, like a cankerous growth, so permeate both the literature and the minds of the community that the operation of cutting it out leaves wounds too deep to heal. Only the re-creation of the body of faith by a Spiritual rebirth can meet the situation. For example, if a Christadelphian renounces the belief that flesh is defiled and obnoxious to God, what becomes of the Christadelphian exposition of the death of Christ? For the very basis of their whole conception is that it was a ritual exhibition of what was due to sinful flesh as the supposed cause of all sin; take away sinful flesh and there is nothing to account for it at all. On what other principle, in harmony with the rest of Christadelphian teaching can the death of Christ be explained?

A letter was received recently from an Australian brother, who says: "The doctrine that Jesus had unclean flesh and had physical sin in his nature, and that he had to justly die because of this, is not held by me, nor, I think I can safely say, by any in the Newcastle Christadelphian Ecclesia, where I meet. I think I can also safely say, with the exception of about a dozen out of 150 members, none have read the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. I personally do not agree with all that is contained in it."

So far as it goes this is a matter for thankfulness and we can congratulate our Australian friends in that it appears that the majority of them reject this fundamental Christadelphian error. But we hope they will not regard it as an unkindly criticism when we say that both their personal letters and the various publications which we are glad to get from time to time, reveal one outstanding deficiency - they lack an adequate explanation of the Sacrifice of Christ.

So far as it reveals itself their tendency is towards the simple conception of Christ dying as an example of faith and obedience unto death; in other words, martyrdom; and if this tendency persists it will inevitably result in complete eclipse of their faith.

Either they must face up to the problem of Christ's death as a ransom for many, and overcome their unfounded objection to the true sense in which he was our substitute, or lose what they have of truth; nature abhors a vacuum in the spiritual as in the physical world. Renunciation of a false teaching is a good thing, but it is not saving faith. It is on our positive belief and acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer by Divine appointment that salvation depends, and although it may seem presumptuous to say so, to the best of our knowledge and understanding such faith is only possible upon the basis outlined by Edward Turney and preached by the Nazarene Fellowship, the true apostolic Gospel.

We have heard it said that even in Britain, the Statement of Faith is not taken very seriously to-day; we were recently told by a friendly member of the Temperance Hall Section that if it were to be honestly applied as a test of fellowship, more than half of the members of some ecclesias would be disqualified, while on the word of a former arranging brother numerous ecclesias have ceased to use it as a basis for the examination of candidates for baptism.

Whether these things are true or partly true, or even if they were entirely false, in our view they offer no refuge or comfort to those who recognize its many objectionable passages, for it is the nominal basis of fellowship almost everywhere, and if there ever has been any tendency for it to fall into oblivion within this last year it has been formally and officially upheld by several sections.

The reunion of the T.H. and Berean Fellowships in the U.S.A. took place on that basis, with some reservations by Buffalo Ecclesia. The movement for recognition between the T.H. and S.St sections is also predicated on mutual acceptance of the Statement of Faith. It is a strange thing that some of those whose signatures to the proposals appeared in "The Christadelphian" were the foremost advocates a few years ago of revision or abolition.

Thus - in the last hours of Gentile Times - the three largest groups of Christadelphians have all publicly endorsed the Statement of Faith and affirmed their acceptance of it as the correct definition of their teaching and beliefs. It is surely therefore no longer legitimate for any member of those fellowships to disclaim his personal responsibility for the contents of that document or for the doctrinal consequences it involves. There may be those who have mental reservations, and it may also be true that the majority have never read it. but in the face of the public declarations which have been made, the name Christadelphian implies acceptance of the doctrines defined in the Statement of Faith, and those who are not able to uphold

it ought as we have, to cease to call themselves by that name and seriously consider whether the baptism to which they submitted inducting them into that faith was baptism into Christ.

Where this places our Australian brethren is a problem for them to decide; one thing we do not need to remind them - a name - at least that name - will save no one; belief of the truth will.

1. Changed Nature

“There is nothing unclean of itself.”

The commonly accepted view of man is that he is in a physically “fallen” state; that is that he was originally created with a nature in some way superior to that which he now has.

Some believe he was incapable of dying; others believe that he would have gone on living indefinitely so long as he remained obedient. Others again think that he must have been impervious to pain or fatigue and not susceptible to the impulses and appetites which we now feel. All these are supposed to be the consequences of sin; some say the results of the sin itself; others say the effects of the penalty of sin.

It is a very certain fact that there is not the least hint or suggestion in Scripture itself that human nature was ever changed, or that it was ever different from what it is now.

The account of man’s creation is as follows:-

“So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created be them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it. And God saw. Everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.” Genesis 1:26-31.

This account of the origin and condition of man is still valid. The original purpose of the Creator for the natural man, to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth still stands; and for that purpose and within the limits of his organism man is still very good. There is nothing in him which makes it difficult or impossible for him to direct his efforts in accordance with the Divine purpose, towards the subduing of the earth and the enjoyment of its goodness instead of towards the subjection and destruction of his fellow men. The foolish idea that human nature was originally very good but is now very bad has misled millions, and apart from it many of the sorrows and tribulations of our race might have been avoided. It is not an innate evil introduced into men by the sin of Adam in the beginning which makes them into oppressors and extortioners, but their own evil behaviour. It is not from any miraculous intervention of God to defile what He had created very good that men have been led to use their intelligence to produce the nuclear weapons which seem likely will end the present world system, but because they have consciously chosen to do such things rather than the better things which they could have done with even less effort and far more pleasure.

There can be no doubt that the house now invested by this particular unclean spirit was once swept and garnished.

Robert Roberts wrote in *The Ambassador*, March 1869, page 85, the words already quoted: “Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatever... there was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation.”

In view of this we wonder what evil genius drove Robert Roberts to re-admit this demon spirit of changed nature into his spiritual dwelling and less than 10 years later to draw up the unscriptural clause in the Statement of Faith which says:

“That Adam broke this law and was... sentenced to return to the ground...a sentence carried into execution by the implantation of a physical law of decay which works out dissolution and death.” *

* [This clause was later changed to read:- **Clause 5:** That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity.]

Assent to this theory, defining a change in nature, is required to-day of every candidate for baptism; yet in 1869 the application of a David Handley, the friend referred to, was rejected by Robert Roberts because he (D.H.) believed such a change took place.

A detailed account of man’s creation is given in Genesis 2:7, and this substantiates the truth that there is only one kind of human nature and that from the beginning man has been exactly as he is to-day.

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

Is not man the same living soul to-day; where is the justification for the suggestion that he was then something better than he is now? If that passage is good enough to prove that man was not created with an Immortal Soul it is good enough to prove he was not created with a nature superior to ours.

It is surely evident from the facts that he had then both the strength and the weakness of ordinary nature and that apart from some further Divine intervention the course of his nature would have brought him, like all other earthy creations, finally to dissolution.

The unenviable position of those who uphold the doctrine of changed flesh is even more apparent from the statement of Dr.Thomas in one of the last things he wrote: “Death and corruption, then, with reproduction, is the fundamental law of the physical system of the six days. From these premises it will be seen that we dissent from our correspondent’s notion that all creation became corrupt, by which we understand him to mean constitutionally impregnated with corruptibility at the fall. We believe the change was moral, not physical.”

Compare this with what is now required of believers by Clause III (or Clause V in later editions) of the Statement of Faith - Sin resulting in the implantation of a physical law of decay, or impregnation with corruptibility, whereas Dr. Thomas dissents and in fact insists on the very reverse, “The change was not physical at all, but moral.”

The very existence of these passages from the pen of both Dr.Thomas and Robert Roberts must impose an almost intolerable mental strain on people like those responsible for “The Logos” in Australia, and others here and abroad like Wille-ites, who hold Elpis Israel and Christendom Astray in almost the same veneration as Scripture itself. Like Nelson they must put their telescope up to a blind eye when sin-in-the-flesh comes over the horizon.

We have always paid tribute to the value of much in those books, but men whose works contain contradictions of such magnitude ought not to be followed where simple scriptural tests prove them to have erred.

It is a very certain fact that if Robert Roberts had adhered to his earlier and correct diagnosis that “There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation,” we would never have witnessed the sad spectacle of a young man like A.D.Norris proclaiming across the world that Jesus was sin.

The real test of whether human nature has been changed is to ask the question, “Was Adam capable of experiencing temptation and committing sin while he was in his original very good state?” The answer is obviously yes, otherwise he could never have sinned. That disposes of the suggestion that people sin because their flesh or their nature predisposes them to do so.

Then if we ask the complementary question: “Is there any sin which we cannot resist, or any good thing which we cannot do because of our supposedly fallen nature?” Again the answer is an emphatic no.

Therefore if we are honest we must admit that whoever or whatever is to blame for sin, it is not God who caused us to be made as we are, nor is it the nature, quality or condition of our flesh. There is no foundation whatsoever for the belief that flesh has been changed; the presumption and evidence are indeed entirely the contrary way.

2. Death By Sin

"If these men die the common death of all men..."

So universal is the belief among Christians that natural death is the wages of sin that one almost despairs of obtaining even a hearing for, much less consideration of, the reasonable but rather less common view that in Scripture, death and death are sometimes two different things.

It is entirely true that in Romans 5:12 the Apostle Paul says “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;” and if a person elects to believe that he is there speaking of natural death and blankly refuses to consider any possible alternative, then so far as that one is concerned the matter is at an end.

There are however, some very sound reasons for thinking that we ought to go a little below the surface. Is Paul referring to the self-evident fact of the natural order, that men have died, are dying and will go on dying so long as they remain a race of corruptible creatures? Or is he explaining to enlightened believers the Divine laws which govern their relationship to God and which will determine their ultimate and eternal destiny?

If it is the purpose of this passage in Romans to establish that natural death, or corruptibility, became the law of our nature because of sin, then it must follow that before he sinned Adam must have been of a different nature, and we are back to changed nature, which as we have already seen, is an untenable view.

Here again we may call Dr. Thomas to witness, this time from *Elpis Israel*, page 72,

“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 therefore, the corruptibility and consequent mortality of their nature without saying they were mortal.
“

There is no doubt whatever that Dr. Thomas was correct here; man as he was created and before he sinned, was corruptible and it necessarily follows that irrespective of whether or not he had sinned, either natural death must have overtaken him or he must have been delivered, as will the righteous living at the return of Christ, by being changed to an incorruptible nature.

In view of this admission by the Doctor and of the unassailable reasoning behind it, what is to become of this second unclean spirit of doctrine which has entered into possession; which affirms that the death which came into the world by sin is the common death of all men, and which is given a certificate of respectability by that same Clause III (or V) of the Statement of Faith where it says: “Adam was sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken... a sentence which works out dissolution and death”?

Well, then, it may be asked: If man was already corruptible, before he sinned and while still very good, what was it that came into the world by sin? Paul says it was death - was he right or wrong?

This might appear to be a very knotty problem, and so long as we are satisfied with superficialities it will remain so. It is very easily solved by asking ourselves the question:

“What was the first death of which we have a record?”

It certainly was not Adam's, even though he was the actual sinner; his death did not take place till nearly a millennium afterwards, and it is probable that many of his descendants pre-deceased him.

The answer is, the first death was that of the animal with whose skin Adam was covered. Our opponent replies that this is not stated but merely inference. Perfectly true; neither is it stated “that Adam commenced to die in the day that he sinned.” This also is an inference. The former, however, has the advantage that unless we imagine that animals were skinned alive, we know it actually happened. This was not a natural death, it was a sacrificial death; a life cut short by bloodshedding. But it is what that death stands for which makes it important.

The death of a sacrifice signifies that the penalty incurred by sin was not the implantation of corruption but a violent or more precisely, a judicial death; as Robert Roberts said on one occasion, “It was typical of a violent manner of death.”

This is put beyond any question by the rite of clothing the man with the skin of the victim, signifying that the death of the sacrifice was the death from which he had been delivered. He died in a legal sense when he transgressed the commandment: he was legally restored to life, after confession and repentance, with the life of the sacrifice. This principle is defined in connection with the prohibition of eating flesh with the blood. “The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Leviticus 17:11.

Thus, when Paul says, “By man came death,” he is speaking in what may be called a doctrinal sense, of the death which really matters; that sentence which “passes upon” all men when they become responsible sinners, and which will be executed upon such as remain under condemnation, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, in the second death.

That this is the correct view is proved by the fact that the condemnation can be individually remitted by faith and obedience. Jesus says, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Paul likewise: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” If the condemnation resulting from sin were natural death, then those in Christ are still under condemnation, for they are still corruptible, and both Paul and Jesus are contradicted.

If death in Scripture is always death, no more, no less, then Christ's words are falsified, because He says a believer has already actually passed from death into life. This is not “prolepsis” - speaking of what is future as though it were present; He is speaking of a death-state and a life-state which exist independently of our physical life or death.

Paul says: “Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” His use of the words “passed upon” implies that he is dealing with something in the nature of a law or sentence. Natural death is not a sentence; it is not passed upon us - we are corruptible and therefore dying because we were created so, as Dr Thomas has said.

The Bible says “The wages of sin is death.” If this does indeed mean natural death then God is unjust; because those wages are paid to good and bad alike, saints and sinners. Furthermore, an additional payment is in store for the wicked - the second death. Even human law does not punish the same crime twice; is God less Just? If on the other hand, as we believe, the wages of sin is that death which one contemplates in reading God's charge to Moses: “Bring forth him that hath cursed, without the camp...and all the congregation shall certainly stone him...when he blasphemeth the name he shall be put to death” - then the ways of God are seen to be in strict accord with justice. “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer judgment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace.” (Hebrews 10:28,29).

Only those who have sinned presumptuously and unrepentantly or who have wilfully withstood the grace of God ever have or ever will suffer such punishment; and such a death can truly be said to be the wages of sin.

Some years ago the force of our reasoning reduced Islip Collyer to the straits of denying that Jesus bore the penalty of sin. In commenting on this John Carter wrote one of the strangest things we have ever read. He said: "As for a full penalty of sin, this happens in the unbroken sleep of an unenlightened, unforgiven sinner." One who is unenlightened does not deserve and will not receive any penalty whatsoever. On the other hand, the death of an unforgiven sinner will not be an unbroken sleep - it will be broken by the resurrection to judgment, condemnation and the second death. That is the penalty of sin; and that is how a false theory can make fools of its professors. The sleep of a sinner is no more a part of his punishment than the sleep of a saint part of his reward.

It is utterly wrong to look upon natural death as in any sense the penalty of sin. When it cuts short a life, severs friendships or leaves a loved one desolate, it brings grief and unhappiness, but in the case of the saints or saved ones, their death is a blessed sleep from which they will awake in Immortal Glory.

We conclude that the truth is not as stated in the Statement of Faith, that the sentence on Adam was his return to the ground. This evil spirit of doctrine should be cast out and replaced by the true one; the sentence was not carried out except in symbol; if it had been the human race would never have existed at all.

Unless this is understood and accepted it is impossible to go on to the mighty truths that the mercy of God is from everlasting unto everlasting and that Jesus is the Saviour of all men - specially of them that believe.

3. Sin-in-the-Flesh

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"

The dogma that sin is in some way an actual property of human flesh is a basic principle of Christadelphianism. Robert Roberts said that sin ran in the blood which Jesus inherited from His mother. Other doctrines are founded upon it and are affected by it and the very purpose of God in giving His Son as a sacrifice for the sin of the world is said to be the necessity for the ritual exhibition of the humiliation and destruction of "sinful flesh."

Both of these phrases, sin-in-the-flesh and sinful flesh are taken from the Authorised Version of Romans 8:3, but neither they nor the ideas which have been developed upon them are in the originals. They reflect the bias of the translators, who, like Christadelphians, believed that Adam's sin physically defiled the human race and gave mankind an inherent tendency to sin which no person can overcome. In the "Thirty-nine Articles" this is called "original sin" and in the Statement of Faith "the law of sin in the members."

Sin is disobedience or transgression of law and therefore an abstract conception; it cannot possibly become a physical quality. Flesh itself cannot be sinful. Only persons, having intelligence and volition can be either sinful or righteous, and these are qualities of the mind or character manifested in actions.

Whether people are the one or the other makes no difference to their literal flesh. They might at one time be sinful and then change and become righteous, or they might change in the opposite direction and become sinners, but their flesh does not change, nor could it be the cause of the change, either to good or to bad.

Temptation is often confused with sin, and because the needs of the body originate desires which can lead to sin, what are called the lusts of the flesh are regarded as the cause of sin. All the natural desires of human nature are good in themselves and capable of being satisfied lawfully, but so also every one of them,

can be the occasion of sin if it is allowed to govern the mind and lead to unlawful action or intent. This is established by 1 Timothy 4:4, "Every creation of God is good, and nothing to be despised if it be received with thankfulness."

It should be evident that to be capable of experiencing temptation is an essential condition for development of character and it is vital to the exercise of the reason and conscience with which, as creatures made in the image of God, men are endowed.

If temptation is sin, then Adam was a sinner before he sinned, for had he not experienced temptation he could not have disobeyed. Reason insists that the desires and impulses natural to human existence and necessary to the continuance of life must have been in man from the beginning. It therefore needed only the promulgation of law to put him to the test; whether he would use his freedom in accordance with the will of his Creator or not.

Similarly, if temptation is sin or proof of sinful inclination, then Jesus was a sinner, for in the wilderness the lust of the flesh, of the eye, of the pride of life, tempted Him to gratify His natural inclinations. The fact that He overcame them by means which are available equally to all other men, namely, His knowledge of what the law of God required, and His determination to do it, is conclusive proof of the falseness of the theory of inborn sin. We shall show in "God-manifestation" how this unclean spirit leads to one even worse.

The 7th chapter of Romans is a favourite resort of believers in unclean flesh as the cause of sin; and it is readily admitted that this chapter is among the writings of Paul which are hard to be understood. If however it is made to supply the proof of a theory which is against the weight of Scripture, and also of his own teaching in other contexts, we shall be wresting his words to our own destruction.

In seeking to understand his reasoning it is a good thing to keep in mind the teaching of Jesus Himself, in Matthew 12:35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Nothing in Paul's teaching would be a direct contradiction of our Lord's teaching, so that, when he says, "What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I," it cannot possibly be right to imagine he intends us to understand that either he or we are cursed with a kind of physical and moral depravity which drives us to sin. Nor can it possibly be right to imagine that he was describing his own life in Christ when he says: "What I hate, that I do," for we know full well that his life after his conversion was a pattern of self-abnegation and obedience only surpassed by Jesus Himself. Whatever Paul meant, it was certainly not that as an Apostle he served the law of sin with his flesh and the law of Christ only with his mind.

Dr. Thomas recognized this and even though generally he appears to have believed implicitly in sinful flesh, he did not make the mistake which so many of his followers make, of supposing that the Apostle was describing his own experience as a man in Christ. In *Elpis Israel*, page 82, he wrote:

"In the animal man there dwelleth no good thing. The Apostle affirms this of himself, considered as an unenlightened son of the flesh."

There is a simple explanation, which enables Paul's words to be understood in harmony with Jesus' teaching, that goodness or badness is a matter of character, not of nature.

This explanation is to be found, first, in the fact that in Romans 7 Paul is speaking from the standpoint of a Jew under the Law; reasoning, as he was well able, having been in the position himself, from the point of view of one who trusted in his descent from Abraham and his observance of the letter of the Law.

It is in this connection that he says: "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This is not the same as saying that in his literal flesh in fact every evil thing did dwell; it means that true goodness, by enlightenment, had perforce to come from outside himself.

Secondly, it must be recognized that when Paul speaks of "the flesh" he is not usually referring to the physical body but to that state of mind or behaviour which is seen in a person whose sole or main object in life is in the gratification of the natural desires. That this is so in the passage in question can be seen from

his words: "But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." He did not mean they were not flesh and blood bodies, which would be nonsense; he meant they were not allowing themselves to be ruled by their lusts.

Again, when he says: "The good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do," he is not to be understood as saying that there was in his physical make-up something which compelled him to do evil or conversely prevented him from doing good; this would be a direct contradiction of his own claim: "I can do all things through Christ;" and it would contradict the example of his own life, for he says: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." This would be the very worst advice, if the Paul we are to follow is the one who makes the despairing cry: "O wretched man that I am."

What Paul is showing is how the Mosaic Law laid down a code of right behaviour, and thus enabled a Jew to distinguish between the good which they realized they should do and the evil which equally clearly they realized they should not do; but at the same time it only served to emphasize the fact that because they were disobedient they were sinners. They were not sinners because they could not keep the Law, but because they did not.

The whole purpose of his argument in 7th Romans is to reinforce what he had already laid down in the 5th chapter, namely, the justice of God in having concluded all, both Jew and Gentile alike, under the sin of Adam on the Federal principle. The importance of this principle is that by it God regards all men as involved in the first transgression (Romans 5:19) and as having lost their right to life with Adam. His object in so regarding them is a wholly merciful one, that the one sacrifice which atoned for Adam's sin could cover all his descendants. The imputation of sin does not make our flesh physically sinful; it alienates us from God legally. Therefore Jesus' one act of obedience, when applied to the individual by faith in the symbol of baptism, can restore us to grace and favour.

That is why Paul can commence the 8th chapter with the words: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This again is no mere figure of speech but for the true believer, a present reality to be prized above all else.

We may now give what we believe to be the correct exposition of Romans 8:3, "For what the law (keeping its ordinances) could not do through the flesh (of men belonging to sin) in that it was weak (incapable of providing an adequate redemptive offering) God, sending His own Son (His life direct from the Creator, NOT from Adam) in the likeness of sin's flesh (the identical flesh but different origin and ownership), and as an offering for sin (a life for a life) condemned sin (by the example of a perfect life) (while He was) in the flesh."

If this is acceptable, it will be seen that in accordance with the best translations the word translated by the adjective "sinful" disappears and becomes the possessive noun "Sin's"; indicating not sinful flesh but flesh belonging to sin (Romans 6:16), while the hyphenated compound sin-in-the-flesh disappears also and indicates what Jesus did while He was in the flesh; to wit, condemned sin. The weakness of the Law was not the inability of ordinary flesh and blood to keep it for Jesus proved that it could be kept perfectly; its weakness lay in the fact that all flesh being under the federal bondage, even a man who kept it perfectly would not even have delivered himself, far less have been in a position to ransom others.

Thus Jesus had to be a new Creation, born with the freedom which Adam lost, before a life of perfect obedience could qualify Him to be the world's Redeemer. He was the same flesh and blood as all other men, but whereas they belonged to Sin, He belonged to God. John 8:34-36. 44.

There is no need to rack the brain to accommodate the contradiction that Jesus was sinful flesh and at the same time separate from sinners; or that He could be an offering for sin and at the same time a sacrifice for Himself; nor to agitate about the origin and effect of sin in the flesh. None of these have any existence in reality but are the evil results of a false beginning.

The writer and those who believe as he does are called Clean Flesh Heretics, and as we have shown are supposed to believe that Jesus had a nature different from our own. This is utterly false, and is known to be so by some of those who still make the charge, but they dare not let the truth come out. There is one flesh of man and Jesus came in that flesh. Of itself it is neither clean nor unclean, sinful nor righteous.

Men themselves, by their behaviour, can show themselves either obedient or disobedient; by their standing in the sight of God they can be clean in a legal sense, with their sins forgiven; (John 13:10) "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Or they can be unclean, but the flesh which He created, and in which as The Logos men beheld His glory, is not to be blamed for the sin and depravity of men. Such is the result of their own evil courses; the will of God is that they should repent, turn from their evil ways, and live. There is nothing in their flesh or nature which makes it any harder for them than for the countless examples of men, who from Abel onwards have obtained a good report, and of whom God is not ashamed to be called their God.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your bands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." - James 4

4. For Himself

"Christ died for the ungodly."

If in some distant future someone should be asked to name the seven wonders of the religious world there is little doubt that amongst the first would be that in the 20th Century a Christian sect arose which included among "the facts, doctrines and principles forming the only basis of saving faith" the doctrine that the death of Christ was for Himself.

If in the early days of "the Truth" the gross errors of Christendom can fairly be likened to the unclean spirit cast out of a man, this is certainly one far more wicked which has entered in and dwells there now.

Clause VI of the Statement of Faith says that Jesus was born under condemnation... "dying therefore for himself."

Even on the face of it, before any examination of this theory, two objections instantly arise; if this was the case, His death could not be a sacrifice in any true sense of the word, and, the God who caused Him to be born under condemnation and then, in spite of His acknowledged moral perfection, required Him to suffer death because of it, would be a monster of injustice.

There are many, many passages of Scripture which tell us in various ways that Jesus gave Himself up voluntarily as a sacrifice, for us, for sinners, for His friends, as a ransom, as a redeemer; so that one can hardly open the book without some such text striking the eye. But where shall we search for one which tells us that He was under condemnation or that His death was required for His own salvation?

Read the passages purporting to prove the clause in the Statement of Faith, and see whether you can find one giving it even the colour of truth, much less establishing it as a first principle. On the contrary, the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 10:26 has the positive declaration "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, BUT NOT FOR HIMSELF."

No recourse to originals or alternative translations has succeeded in getting any other meaning out of this statement, and it stands for all time a direct and positive contradiction from the Word of God, of the Statement of Faith.

The belief of Christadelphians is reached by deductive reasoning - of which we make no complaint where the premises are sound. This commences with the supposed fact that human flesh is essentially evil and fit only for destruction, and proceeds to the conclusion that since Jesus was of this same evil nature, only His death, involving its destruction, could deliver Him.

The fallacy lies, as we have already shown, in the fact that human flesh is not physically evil; the same flesh can bring forth either good fruits or bad fruits. As Professor Blackham has said: "We should speak, not of human nature but of human behaviour."

If Adamic condemnation were a matter of physical nature, then of course Jesus must have been under condemnation because He was most certainly the same physical nature as ourselves; but it is not so; changed flesh is as false as a personal devil, immortal souls, hell and heaven-going, and the rest of the apostate rubbish with which it is associated, and from whence it comes. If Jesus had been physically unclean or legally under condemnation it is impossible that His death could have been of benefit either to Himself or to us. Every principle of sacrifice would be broken; instead of a clean, perfect offering, as laid down repeatedly and categorically (e.g., Leviticus 22:19,20,21,22,24) we should be asking God to accept at our hands one cursed and defiled.

It is the partial realisation of this inconsistency which makes it a well-nigh impossible task for a Christadelphian to preach Christ crucified.

Consider the attempted explanation in the Statement of Faith. Clause VI says the purpose was that Jesus should “purchase life by perfect obedience, and by dying abrogate the law of condemnation for those who were under it and therefore for himself.”

One can understand how perfect obedience might be held to purchase life, but this would be eternal life; but it was not His eternal life which Jesus laid down, it was the life of His flesh, which was in the blood. The fact is that the life which Jesus sacrificed was the life which He received before He was capable of manifesting either obedience or disobedience. But what does the rest of the clause mean? It conveys exactly nothing. How or why could dying abrogate a law which required it?

Compare this with the clarity of the scriptural explanation given by Edward Turney. The life of the race, forfeited by Adam, placing the whole of mankind in debt for the sum of - One Life. The bill paid by the only man who had the price - One Life - His own; received at His birth, new and free from the source of all life, and preserved by Him by His perfect obedience until the time came when He voluntarily gave it up as the price of our deliverance. This is a true sacrifice; this gives the honour where it is due; this alone adequately meets the Apostle’s reminder: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty, might be rich.” 2 Corinthians 8:9.

The passage of Scripture most frequently advanced to defend this unclean spirit of doctrine which makes Jesus’ death the ritual destruction of sinful flesh is part of Hebrews 7:26-27, which runs:

“For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled. separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”

There is no dispute that this refers to Jesus; what is disputed is the outrageous suggestion that it draws a parallel between those high priests and Jesus, when in actual fact it draws a direct contrast between them.

We were recently in receipt of a letter from an old gentleman who is beginning to see the truth, and says he is far happier than he has been in his life; he enclosed a letter from his ecclesial Recorder, who referred to Hebrews 7:26, and says this only applies to Jesus after his ascension and that in the days of His flesh He was unclean and defiled by sin; and our friend asked for our opinion.

We were able to show him, and prove from Scripture that even if, in its immediate context this verse were referring to Jesus only in His Priestly office in heaven, which is more than doubtful, each of the five qualifications mentioned belonged to Him as much in His earthly life as they do now.

Thus:-

- 1) Holy. The angel to Mary: “That holy thing which shall be born of thee.” Luke 1:35
- 2) Harmless. The Apostle Peter: “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” 1 Peter 2:22

- 3) Undefined. The Psalmist: “Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord; or who shall stand in His Holy Place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.” Psalm 24:4
- 4) Separate from sinners. Jesus: “Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” John 8:23.
- 5) Made higher than the heavens. The Apostle Paul: “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1:4

All these things therefore did in fact apply to Him while He was on earth, in the flesh, and so far from that Recorder’s warnings, threats and arguments terrifying our friend he has expressed the intention of being re-baptized so soon as less wintry conditions make that possible to his 78 years.

After so clearly specifying those qualifications which made Jesus so utterly distinct and separate from high priests taken from among men “which have infirmity,” the Apostle proceeds to the equally pointed way in which the offering Jesus made was in contrast to those made by the High Priests. He says “Who needeth NOT, daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins.”

Why had the high priest first of all to offer for himself? Because he had to be cleansed from sin before he could be a fit type of our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, and only after he had offered for his own sins and thus been made legally clean, he became a fitting type of Jesus, the Sinless One. That is why the high priest had to offer two sacrifices, the first for himself, then for the people, whereas Jesus offered but one; none for Himself, only for the people.

If this verse proved what Christadelphians claim, then it would prove too much; it would prove, not that Jesus had a sinful nature but that He had personal sins, for the first offering of the high priest was “for his own sins,” not for his nature.

When Aaron offered up the sacrifice for the sins of the people, which foreshadowed the death of Christ, like the Saviour he needed NOT to offer for himself, because he had already done so. When Jesus offered up His sacrifice, He needed not to offer for Himself, because He was holy from birth and had done nothing to defile Himself and was thus able to offer Himself “without spot to God.” Hebrews 9:14.

5. God-Manifestation

“A man approved of God among you”

It may come as a surprise to many people to find this highly favoured doctrine included amongst what we have likened to a group of seven wicked spirits. There is, as we shall explain, a true sense in which God was manifested in Christ, but it is not the doctrine known amongst Christadelphians as “God-manifestation.”

If we ask the question who and what was Jesus Christ? Christians in general are divided into two large groups.

There are the Trinitarians, who believe that Jesus has existed as one of a triune God-head from all eternity, and that at the appointed time He came down to earth and taking upon Himself a human soul was born as the babe of Bethlehem. No time need be wasted on such a view here, for it infringes the very first declaration of God: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord,” and it nullifies practically everything that the Scriptures tell us about Jesus.

On the other hand are the Modernists, to whom Jesus was no more than a man – a view which increasingly appeals to modern scepticism, which recognizes the moral value of Christian ethics but cannot face the implications of the belief that Jesus was the Son of God.

All that need be said of this is that those who claim to be Christians yet question the authenticity of the brief but impregnable testimony in regard to His birth are like a house without foundations or a tree without roots. Even if the gospels were completely silent in regard to the circumstances of Jesus' birth it would be possible to establish it by deductive reasoning from other contexts, because underlying it is a principle which is vital to the purpose of God.

A third, and perhaps the most subtly dangerous misconception, since it is held by a body which accepts the authority of the Inspired Word, and who would scorn the charge of Trinitarianism, is that which pays lip service to the truth that Jesus was a man but at the same time asserts that His birth resulted in a person who was a mixture of human nature and divine nature.

This doctrine, deceptively called "God-manifestation," borders on Trinitarianism, as many Christadelphians have pointed out, and is if anything more insidious because of a certain vagueness with which it is surrounded.

It has, however, been precisely stated by Dr. Thomas, when he said; "Jesus had two sides, the one Deity, the other man," and also by Robert Roberts, who said: "he was the flesh embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit." Many people read such statements and see nothing wrong with them, but when they are carried to their logical conclusion they amount to a denial of the normal humanity of Jesus.

In the Hymn Book they have produced sentiments like "The Godhead veiled in flesh we see," "The Incarnate Deity," "God hid beneath a form of earth." Such ideas are a scandal to clear-minded people and though we are aware that some Christadelphians have loudly protested against them, the majority have compromised and adjusted their minds to the idea that they can be understood in the light of Jesus' claim to be the personal revelation of the Father.

Make no mistake; behind those phrases and in the theories of works like "Theophany," in themselves inexcusable in the mouths of intelligent Christians, is a fundamental and far-reaching misconception, another wicked spirit traceable back to original sin. People who sing such things are in no position to inveigh against Trinitarians.

You may see the direction of it in Robert Roberts' words; "His knowledge at twelve would have been an impossibility with a merely human brain."

Let those who charge us, as Clean Flesh Heretics, with teaching that the nature of Jesus was different from other men's, ponder this statement, wherein our merely human brain is contrasted with Jesus' knowledge at twelve. Let W.J.White ask himself, and answer honestly, who is making Jesus' nature different, we or Robert Roberts?

Again he said: "It may be difficult for us, as mere flesh-borns, to realize this combination of the human and the Divine in one person, but the fact of the combination is self-evident." This is exactly the way in which the Church insists that its people accept the mystery of the Trinity, even though they cannot understand it.

Consider again Robert Roberts' contrast between "us mere flesh-borns" and "the combination of the human and the Divine in one person," and bearing in mind also his statement that "the Renunciationist heresy makes him a mere man." Ask yourself who is, in fact, really guilty of the denial that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

To say that we are mere flesh-borns and that Jesus was a combination of human and divine is surely making Him of a nature different from us; and those who preach that God was manifest in the flesh in this sense are certainly preaching another Christ than the Apostles preached; for there is one thing beyond question, if Jesus was that kind of hybrid creation He was not a man.

The whole theory is in fact utter and complete nonsense, and has only gained acceptance because of a consummate failure to understand the true purpose of the Virgin Birth. This lack or misconception is, if anything, worse than plain disbelief; a modernist who rejects the Virgin Birth is never likely to fall into the grievous error of teaching that Jesus was a mixture in one person of humanity and divinity.

The Christadelphian belief is that the reason Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit was in order to endow Him with the power to overcome His sinful nature. Observe how the original evil spirit - the belief that sin became a physical property of flesh, goes to the very heart of the purpose of God and substitutes a piece of worthless counterfeit for the real treasure. For if it was a power given Him by His birth, which enabled Him to resist sin, then He was a mere puppet - His temptations were not real temptations; He was not made in all points like unto His brethren, and it would be a stupid fraud to present Him before us as an example and pattern.

Furthermore, if it had been consonant with the honour and justice of God to give Jesus the strength to overcome temptation which He did not give to Adam when he was tempted, and which - presumably - He does not give us when we fail. He could have done it without the need for the stupendous miracle which gave Him birth.

On lots of occasions, when it was appropriate, God has given strength to prophets and holy men by a direct infusion of power, and had that been His purpose He could have done the same for Jesus. But as we know, in the greatest crisis of His life, Jesus was left to battle alone - in all the weakness and frailty of human nature. Had He at these times a hidden reservoir of supernatural strength due to a supposed mixture of divinity in His nature? Again we come back to the point - if He had He was not a man; He was not tempted in all points like as we are

Why then the virgin birth? There is the simplest and most satisfying explanation, lying at hand, only waiting to be picked up. It was in order to give Him the legal freedom which alone would enable Him to be a sacrifice.

Had He received His life through Joseph, or any other human, it would have been traceable back to Eden, to the life which was forfeited by sin.

This same life has been passed down from father to child generation after generation in an unbroken line of life, and every human being is an offshoot of it.

The one exception in the human race is Jesus.

He did not owe His existence to the will of the flesh, and apart from the miracle of His begetting He would never have been born. Therefore His life came direct from God and not from Adam.

This is the point made by Edward Turney, and it is the key to the whole understanding of how God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

The phrase "free life" was used and has been the occasion of misrepresentation; if it is understood it fairly represents our view; there is no suggestion of any intrinsic difference in the nature or quality of the "life" and philosophical or scientific discussions about what life is are quite beside the point. The fact that matters is beyond dispute and no one can refute it: Jesus' life came direct from God; our lives come from our fathers. This constitutes the vital legal difference between Jesus and all other people which He spoke of in John 8:35,36,

"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin; and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." In view of these words we feel under no obligation to apologize for believing Jesus' life was free; we do not imply any difference other than that of source or ownership; as He says; "Ye are from beneath, I am from above." "I proceeded forth and came from God; ye are of your father the devil."

In the statement of Robert Roberts, quoted above, he says that mere flesh-borns will find it difficult to understand a combination of human and divine in one person. The reason we find it difficult is because it is utterly inconceivable and unscriptural. The Apostle Paul says; "There is one flesh of men;" Jesus said; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Before anyone claims that it is self-evident that Jesus had flesh which was something between human nature and Divine nature he should produce the evidence and meet

the objections. But Robert Roberts did neither. He made the round assertion and blamed anyone who queried it with lacking spiritual education.

It is no use saying the difficulty lies in the fact that we are “mere flesh-borns;” the revelation of God was intended to enlighten and give understanding to mere flesh-borns, and if the theory of God-manifestation cannot be made understandable it is because, like Trinitarianism, it is false.

The simple truth is that although Jesus derived His life direct from God, and thus was the only-begotten Son of God and by the right of inheritance the heir of all things created by and belonging to His Father, yet He was Son of Man, raised out of the human family and therefore related to it, and with the only kind of nature He could have had in these circumstances - flesh and blood identical with all other men. We may suppose that there must have been in Jesus’ mind a consciousness of the bond between Him and His Father which no other has ever known, yet at the same time this cannot have been very different from the bond which exists between other fathers and their sons and as we know, Jesus had in fact the same limitations and could experience the same temptations as other men.

To sum up; the difference between Jesus and the rest of mankind is one of origin; a legal difference. His flesh was neither better, as we are falsely accused of believing, nor worse. His divine origin did not make Him a semi-human being with a special power or strength to resist sin, as Christadelphians do in fact falsely teach. He overcame sin by the exercise of powers and resources equally available to us, and thereby He showed Himself an example and condemned sin by proving that there is nothing intrinsically evil in ordinary human nature which makes obedience impossible.

Finally, how was God really made manifest in Him? First we should say by the fact that in Him God revealed His solution to the world’s problem of Salvation and the elimination of sin; He was indeed the Word made flesh. The wisdom and love which met man’s failure by producing His own Son, related to the race and of one flesh and blood with them, but at the same time free from the condemnation which sin had incurred was seen to the full in Jesus. He manifested God by the gracious words which He spoke and in the mighty works which He performed in His Father’s name. And finally in the supreme love and self-sacrifice when He suffered that awful death for the sin of the world.

6. Mortal Resurrection

“The dead shall be raised incorruptible.”

Throughout the history of the truth there has been controversy on the question of the Resurrection. This is not because there is any great obscurity about it in Scripture but because, being committed to an untenable view Christadelphians are constantly under the necessity of trying to sustain it against the simple truths of Scripture.

The teaching defined in the Statement of Faith is that at the return of Christ there is to be a simultaneous appearance of faithful and unfaithful before the judgment seat of Christ, to decide who are worthy of eternal life, and this requires that the dead rise in their mortal condition, those accounted worthy being subsequently made immortal and those unworthy consigned to destruction.

Those who defend this view admit that most of the important Scripture references to the resurrection of the faithful imply that they come forth incorruptible, and it has been shown that all of them are compatible with this view. The great objection to accepting it is held to be that it nullifies the judgment and so among the Doctrines to be Rejected is No. 17, “That the dead rise in an immortal state.”

In this article and the next we shall show that there is no real substance in this objection; there is no incompatibility between the fact that everyone of us shall give account of himself to God, and the fact that the saints in Christ will rise incorruptible.

First we review a few of the most obvious passages and show the clarity with which this latter fact is established.

The Psalmist says: "As for me, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." If he awakes with that likeness which he desired he could surely not be still mortal; this is not conclusive of course but an early indication of a truth which becomes increasingly clear in later Scriptures.

In Luke 14:14 Jesus speaks of one who "shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just," and later He says "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke 20:35,36 - He is clearly referring to a resurrection where the righteous will be rewarded, and those who are accounted worthy to obtain that resurrection, he says, cannot die any more. Speaking of his own fervent desire the Apostle Paul says: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." If the object of his desire was no more than the first stage of the sprout process expounded by Dr. Thomas in "Anastasis," Paul would not know even when he had attained unto the resurrection whether or not he was to be accepted. Furthermore, in Hebrews 11:35 we read of those who endured dreadful tribulation "that they might obtain a better resurrection." Better than what? Obviously there is more than one resurrection - more than one kind of resurrection - and the desire of all sensible people is to attain to that resurrection from which they cannot die any more.

So far we have only touched upon a couple of the more obvious texts; even so they clearly indicate the falsity of the inference that the righteous and the unrighteous must rise at the same moment. The real evidence is still to come.

The classic passage is 1 Corinthians 15:51: "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." This statement is directly to the point and seems to admit of no alternative to what it clearly says: "the dead shall be raised incorruptible." On the face of it, anyone who replies "Oh no - the dead shall be raised corruptible, and only the righteous will be made incorruptible, and that after passing the judgment" is making the Apostle look foolish. It places them in such a dilemma, that when C.C.Walker produced a pamphlet entitled "Raised Incorruptible," he wrote, "We have endeavoured to find a place for 1 Corinthians 15." What an astonishing admission! In a work claiming to be a scriptural exposition of the doctrine of resurrection, to be under the necessity of endeavouring to find a place for the one great chapter in the Bible on the subject must be a very considerable embarrassment. The author admits that "elliptically it teaches immortal resurrection," and so far from trying to find a place for it in a treatise designed to reverse its obvious teaching, this chapter should be the ultimate court of appeal, for Paul was answering the very question propounded.

"But some will say, How are the dead raised up and with what body do they come?"

It is notable that although the Apostle has been dealing in detail with what may be called the mechanics or the process of resurrection, there is not so much as a hint that the dead are to come forth in mortal bodies for the purpose of judgment and subsequent reward or punishment. He is of course dealing with the resurrection which he hoped concerned himself and those to whom he wrote, the saints in Christ, and we should not expect him to deal with the case of other classes whose resurrection comes at another time and under other conditions.

He takes the analogy of a seed and shows that the thing which grows is not the same as the thing which was planted: "Thou sowest not the body that shall be." The original seed dies, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." Here surely, if it was fact, was the moment to explain that the original body had to be recreated and stand up so that, in the Doctor's phraseology "immortality might be flashed upon it." But Paul's exposition is directly opposed to the idea that the same seed which was sown had to be raised up in order that "this corruptible can put on incorruption."

Declaring "So also is the resurrection of the dead," he proceeds to a series of precise contrasts between things which differ, and every one emphasizes the complete transformation of the body which is sown in death to the body which springs forth in resurrection;

“It is sown in corruption - it is raised in incorruption.”
“It is sown in dishonour - it is raised in glory.”
“It is sown in weakness - it is raised in power.”
“It is sown a natural body - it is raised a spiritual body.”

Then follows the tremendous declaration commencing “Behold I show you a mystery” and ending “the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.” Now notice! Paul says that those who are alive will be changed in a moment - in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the trumpet. So if it is a fact that the dead are raised without this change and have to wait for judgment then it would be a contradiction of his statement in 1 Thessalonians 4 that those that are alive and remain until his coming shall not go before (prevent) those that are asleep.

On page 6 of the pamphlet mentioned above, C.C.Walker says: “Restricting these words to the mere act of emergence from the ground, they naturally seem an express affirmation that the body is incorruptible, spiritual and immortal from the first moment of restoration.” Amen; they do indeed. And since in Paul’s vocabulary, resurrection means emergence from the ground, and as he was answering the explicit question “How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come,” we feel quite satisfied to regard the matter as settled. How anyone can apply the adjective “mere” to the stupendous miracle of the dead coming out of their graves and suggest that this is not actually resurrection passes comprehension. Are we to suppose that C.C.Walker was better informed than the Scriptures, for it would appear that Lazarus “merely” came forth yet there is never the suggestion that he was not raised or that his resurrection was incomplete.

The obstacle to a Christadelphian accepting the fact that the dead in Christ will rise incorruptible is that it is argued that this would anticipate the judgment and appears to contradict the fact that everyone will receive according to that he hath done. It is held that to be raised incorruptible involves the conferring of the reward before the person is tried. This has been well answered in the following words of Wm. Laing:-

“Such an objection could only carry weight on the supposition that the tribunal of Christ is the same as our courts of law. But this is not so; in a human court of law the judge is supposed to know nothing of the case or the merits of the parties until the evidence is laid before him, whereas the Judge of all the earth is perfectly acquainted with the history of each one who stands before him; so that whatever be the purpose for which his servants must appear before him, it cannot be to determine their worthiness, and there is therefore no incongruity in those who are Christ’s at his coming being raised incorruptible and yet appearing subsequently before his judgment seat.”

“Moreover (he continues) the language of 2 Corinthians 5:10 suggests a gradation in the rewards received “according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;” but no one can receive more of eternal life than another. Yet we know full well that the honours and rewards to be conferred on the faithful in Christ Jesus shall vary according to the merits of each individual case. As in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard each one received a penny whether he had borne the burden and heat of the day or had laboured but one hour, so those who are Christ’s at his coming shall each one receive the gift of eternal life - the young disciple who at the last hour of the day of salvation, put on the Lord Jesus, and the veteran who from youth to old age has “fought the good fight of the faith;” yet the place and position of these in the glorious kingdom of God shall differ immensely from each other.”

This same fact is established by the passage in 1 Corinthians 3:13,

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest... If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

We are of course only considering those who truly belong to Christ; the fate of those who reject Him, or forsake their faith, or commit such sin as cuts them off, is a different matter. They are of those who have no part in the first resurrection and therefore must be amongst the rest of the dead who will rise at the end of the Millennium to be judged before the Great White Throne. As against the narrow Christadelphian

view, it is our opinion that this resurrection will bring forth people of all nations, from all epochs of history, whose capacities or opportunities have rendered them responsible to their Creator, to be judged according to their works, the worthy ones to become immortal children of the Kingdom, the unworthy ones to be cast into outer darkness and eternal destruction.

The truth is then, that so far from having to go on trial for his life at the judgment, one who belongs to Christ is assured now of a glorious waking; the blessedness of his position is that there is NO uncertainty, his name has been inscribed in the book of life even now and the object of his life is so to walk that it is not blotted out. That is why Revelation 20:6 says "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."

This necessarily very brief treatment of the subject would be incomplete without some reference to the resurrection of Jesus

The orthodox Christadelphian view is that Jesus Himself was raised in mortal flesh and "ascended" to Spirit nature at some unspecified later time, and even Edward Turney, at the time of his lecture, held this view though it was not long before he realized it had to be abandoned with the other fallacies which gave rise to it. Critics are not slow to discover this fault in his work, even though they can be singularly blind to the 99% of good, but we cannot claim the license of Christadelphian editors to alter and trim the writings of dead men.

However, in recent years an increasing number of Christadelphians are realizing that the old idea is untenable. Even dyed in the wool sinful-flesh mongers can appreciate the absurdity of supposing if Christ had to die for the purpose of destroying His sinful nature, that it is at all conceivable that He would rise from the dead with the nature which He had died to destroy. Even W.F.Barling, when asked, in the Debate if he believed Jesus rose mortal was constrained to reply "I don't know."

It is stated that "He was put to death in the flesh raised in the Spirit." And this indicates plainly what both reason and fact confirm, that from the moment of restoration to life His body was energized by the Spirit.

The blood which gave life to His natural body had been spilled at the foot of the Cross, and no one can suppose that it was restored to His veins to enable Him to live in the interval between coming from the tomb and receiving immortality.

The strange detail in the account of the disposition of the grave clothes when the disciples looked into the tomb, "the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself," is a direct piece of evidence that when Jesus revived He passed out of the cerements without unwinding or disturbing them as only a Spirit body could, leaving them as they lay; just as He was able to appear within, in the midst of the disciples, "the doors being shut."

If this is not the import of this seemingly unimportant detail why is it recorded with such precision?

Robert Roberts makes much of Jesus' words to Mary in John 20:17, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." He suggests this means "I am not yet ascended to My Father's nature," and that Jesus restrained Mary from touching Him because being unclean from the grave, contact with Him would have defiled Mary. On all counts, this suggestion is so fantastic that all thoughtful people have rejected it long ago and adopt the alternative translation, "Detain me not," but it was advanced in the letter mentioned in the previous chapter so that it is still current in some quarters and must be met.

Whatever the meaning in the original of the words Jesus used, one thing is certain - it cannot have been "Touch me not" for in the parallel passage in Matthew 28:28 we read "And as they (Mary Magdalene and the other Mary) went to tell His disciples, behold Jesus met them saying All Hail. And they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him." There can therefore have been no reason why they should not touch Jesus, because they actually did so - they had thrown themselves at His feet, clasping Him in their arms and all the inferences as to His still unclean defiled mortal state, based on the words "Touch me not" disappear, for they were never spoken.

But while there was no reason for Jesus to prohibit them from touching Him, there can have been - indeed there was - a very good reason why He should tell them not to impede Him or delay Him at that particular moment. "Be not afraid - go tell my brethren." What? "I ascend to my Father and to your Father." "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." It therefore appears to the writer that during the first day, after the meetings in the early morning with the women at the tomb and before He Joined those two on the road to Emmaus Jesus literally ascended into the presence of God and we may suppose met His Father face to face for the first time, returning in the evening of the day to appear in the midst of the disciples gathered together.

7. Un-Forgiveness

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

The six unclean spirits of doctrine so far examined are obnoxious more particularly because they falsify or distort various aspects of the purpose of God and reduce the life and suffering of the Lord Jesus to something little better than a morality play. This seventh one is especially sad because it robs believers of the one great source of strength and comfort which faith in Christ can enable them to enjoy, not in the future only, but now; namely, the knowledge that their sins are forgiven and the assurance of acceptance at His return.

Christadelphian teaching is well summed up in the words of Robert Roberts: "The forgiveness of sins and appearance before Christ at His coming for judgment will not appear incompatible doctrines, when we remember that we are not permitted to know of our forgiveness till then; all our sins before baptism are forgiven then; but the question is about things after."

We believe this view to be utterly mischievous and misconceived and its effects upon the minds and lives of those who entertain it depressing in the extreme and destructive of the hopefulness and trust which the Gospel can and should inspire. Only a complete failure to understand the purpose and value of the sacrifice of Christ can account for the fact that so many people are content to accept it as if it were true.

If believers are not permitted to know whether or not their sins are forgiven "until they have appeared in full angelic assize and told the story of their lives and waited for the verdict," what is the purpose of prayer? Of what use is it that we have a High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" who ever liveth to make intercession?

It is a contradiction in terms to say our sins are forgiven and yet we are not permitted to know they are forgiven; to speak of forgiveness of sins and waiting for a verdict.

Such a view is only possible where there is no realization of "the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Let it be repeated, we do not question the fact that there is a process of judgment for all men and that ultimately every man will be rewarded according to his works.

What we do not believe is that the judgment of the saints will take the form of a judicial assize possibly occupying a period of forty years after the return of Christ. We do not believe that the brethren of Christ will have to wait for a verdict at His judgment seat before they will know whether or not they are to have Eternal Life.

Indeed, it is a very certain fact that anyone who is in doubt about the matter to-day and is depending upon his good deeds outweighing his bad deeds in the Day of Judgment will stand a poor chance.

The life which is to be had through Christ is a gift, the reward of faith, and it has been already given to those who really belong to Him. This is what He says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my

word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

The word Jesus used which is translated condemnation is the same word as judgment. He does not therefore say that in the judgment he that believeth shall not be condemned, He says he that believeth shall not even come into judgment. Why? Because at that day those who belong to Christ have been judged already; it is taking place now day by day. Paul says:

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged (that is by our own conscience, day by day) we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:31,32).

In the mercy of God we have no need to live in dread of whether or no we can strike a credit balance when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and those who are so blind or lacking in faith as to be living with that object in view will only have themselves to blame if their own principle is applied and proves them bankrupt.

The Apostle John gives one very simple test which will give the answer now:

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

Although the fact is steadily being lost sight of, the true basis of the Christian hope is still the redeeming blood of Christ, and those whose faith rests upon the sacrifice by which we have been purchased out of bondage have the promise of the life of the age. It will not be for any good works that we shall be accepted, but because we belong to Christ.

Eternal life is a gift, not the reward of works, and the condition of its bestowal is faith in Him and union with Him now. This is why these questions are so vital to Christadelphians to-day; those evil spirits of doctrine we have exposed deny the efficacy of His sacrifice, since on their own confession they do not know whether or not it will suffice for their salvation; they are waiting for the day of judgment to decide that about which they should have no doubt know. “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Since so much hangs upon it, how very important it is that we should properly understand how we have been redeemed, and what we have been redeemed from and what our present position really is.

It is perfectly true that the behaviour of a believer must be consistent with his profession; if it is not so he will forfeit the heavenly citizenship which he acquired at his baptism and will become a castaway.

This again is not a matter which it will require the judgment of Christ to manifest; it is a matter of daily self-examination: “But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup... For if we would judge ourselves we shall not be judged.”

It must be confessed that those of us who best realize that sin is not an inevitable consequence of a supposed bias in human nature are probably most conscious of our failures.

This is indeed a vital point, for unless we do in fact realize that when we do wrong it is our own fault for not trying harder to do right, it is quite impossible for us to be truly repentant. Inevitably, consciously or unconsciously, a person who believes in Sin-in-the-flesh must lay the blame for his deficiencies upon the evil nature he believes himself to have been born with, instead of upon his own mental and moral laziness, and thus produces the very state of mind which denies him the benefit of forgiveness.

This is exactly the Christadelphian position and it accounts for their Pharisaic hardness and utter lack of emotional response to the loving appeal of God to be reconciled; there has never been a more devastating exposure of it than was given in an article in “The Christadelphian” by Peter Watkins. He wrote:

“Sin is a product of Adamic flesh, and sin after baptism indicates a revival of the Adamic nature which we purported to destroy at baptism. Yet if we are still members of the body of Christ we are still without sin, for “in him is no sin.” If we are truly in Christ, it is not

we that have sinned, but it is the irrepressible Adamic nature which we have been striving to mortify that has obtruded itself - and we heartily deplore the fact. 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.”

In the course of this controversy it has been necessary to turn the searchlight upon some truly amazing statements by Christadelphian writers; as for example when John Carter, denying that Jesus paid the penalty of sin in our stead, affirmed that “He merely suffered death;” and before this work is complete we have to deal with some even worse. But in its utter foolishness we still regard this argument by Peter Watkins as the most impudent piece of perverted dogma outside the Roman Catholic system.

Where is the Scripture authority for speaking of “Adamic flesh” or “irrepressible Adamic nature,” or the proof that sin is a product of flesh? How can anyone be so absurdly unscriptural as to say that one who commits sin is still without sin or to speak of “transgressions committed despite ourselves”? What imbecile twist could allow a man to write, “If we are in Christ it is not we that have sinned but Adamic nature obtruding itself”?

Apart from all Scripture proving absolutely the contrary, such preposterous back-to-front reasoning condemns itself. It is the very negation of what the Apostle John teaches in the chapter from which he quotes.

The Apostle says “in Him is no sin.” 1 John 3; referring clearly to Jesus. Now as we have seen, Christadelphians contradict this and say Oh, yes, there was sin in Him, in His flesh. Robert Roberts said “Sin ran in the blood he inherited from His mother.” This is bad enough in all conscience, but Peter Watkins is not even content with denying or ignoring its true application to Jesus; he takes the liberty, utterly without warrant, to apply it to the individuals forming the corporate Body of Christ, and uses it to prove that their sins don’t count. If ever there was a case of arguing black is white, of putting evil for good and good for evil, this is it!

The Apostle’s purpose was the very reverse. By holding up the Spotless Christ as an example, he was exhorting them to keep themselves from sin; encouraging them to purify themselves “even as He is pure,” and showing them how unthinkable it was that anyone in Christ should fail to strive to walk worthy.

“Little children,” he says, “let no man deceive you; he that committeth sin is of the devil.”

When Peter Watkins says that those who commit sins remain in Christ and righteous he convicts himself as a liar and a deceiver.

The Apostle recognizes that in moments of weakness or temptation we may fall into sin, and so he says; “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,” so that we may ask and obtain forgiveness, but Peter Watkins’ argument amounts to a justification of sins because they are, so he says, committed despite ourselves and the result of supposed Adamic nature. This is even an encouragement to people to be careless of their behaviour, since they can lay the blame on their nature and claim that they are still without sin. And believing it, how can they even set about the task of cleansing themselves with a good heart, far less feel truly sorry for their sins?

Will Judas be able to justify his betrayal on the grounds that his irrepressible Adamic nature obtruded itself? It is a certain fact that he heartily deplored his sin - and not in a pious phrase like friend Peter - he went out and hanged himself. But was his sin committed despite himself? Ananias no doubt had his full share of the supposed Adamic flesh, but the fact does not seem to have been given the same exculpatory prominence by the Apostle Peter as by his namesake.

Is it not time to abandon this ridiculous talk about “Sins committed despite ourselves”? We do what we choose to do, whether it is good or evil, and we should take note of John’s exhortation:

“He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.”

The servant of Christ is going through a daily process of judgment, judging himself through his conscience, by the standard of Christ. We must confess that most of us come out of it very poorly, but, "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust," and even though our successes may be very insignificant and our failures many, if we confess and repent, honestly striving to keep faith with Him we shall in no wise be cast out.

In the pamphlet "Carterdelphia" this writer showed that the reason for the failure to rise to a full appreciation of the security and confidence which a believer can have is because the real significance of baptism is increasingly misunderstood. Attention is concentrated upon the forgiveness of previous sins instead of upon its true significance as a redemption from a previous state of alienation. It is this misplacement of emphasis which betrayed Robert Roberts into declaring; "All our sins before baptism are forgiven then; the question is about things after." This process has now gone so far that W.F.Barling has affirmed that redemption and forgiveness mean the same thing. The truth is, no one can have any forgiveness whatsoever until he has been redeemed; but having, by a proper understanding of how and why the blood of Christ has purchased our redemption, come into the restored relationship of sons of God, we shall understand how and why our sins can be forgiven.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgression from us. So great is His mercy toward them that fear him."

Wm. Richmond says;

"What an awful blighting error is Brother Roberts' theory of judgement! How it dims the glory of the Cross of our dear Lord, and brings a dark cloud between God's children and their Father. Such as believe this theory may pity many who hold other unscriptural theories, but few errors are more pitiable than this. If sins committed before baptism were forgiven only, the believer would have a gleam of sunshine then, but all after would have been uncertainty and one could almost wish he had expired on rising from the water."

If we cannot know whether our sins are forgiven, what, did the Apostle John mean by "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. In the next chapter he says; "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven."

Surely it scarcely needs arguing that it is a daily duty of a Christian to ask for forgiveness, and there is something seriously wrong with our conception of the character of God if it is not also a daily cause for thankfulness and praise that we can have it and know that we have it. To doubt it is to doubt the faithfulness of God, for He has so promised.

Why did the Psalmist cry out "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Was it not because He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy? Where then are the sins whose forgiveness we cannot know about, the things in question after baptism?

Anyone whose soul is burdened with a load of sins and living in dread of judgment ought to confess and repent - now; ask for forgiveness and try to do better. One such, who realizes his position and says "I will arise and go to my father and will say, Father, I have sinned..." need have no doubt about his reception. Will his Father reply, "Go thy way; no forgiveness till the Day of Judgment"? Anyone who so misunderstands the character of God and His long-suffering and mercy is indeed meriting the very adverse judgment he dreads. As also is he who lays his guilt upon a supposed irrepressible Adamic nature and finds no place for a tear of repentance.

The loving invitation of Jesus; "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" is a promise of peace and forgiveness to sinners. To accept it and believe that with all our sins blotted out we can be perfect in Him is not smugness, nor complacency; it is taking God at His word.

When we finally do so we may find a stronger inducement to rid ourselves of the sin which doth so easily beset us and to walk worthy, than even the dread of the Day of Judgment.

What person, conscious of his possession of the priceless treasure of heavenly citizenship, and of the suffering and self-sacrifice which it cost our Saviour to obtain it for us, would not be more careful not to forfeit such wealth nor offend or hurt those to whom he owed it, than would the miserable creature, overburdened with guilt to add another item to his already doubtful account?

Doctrine of Devils

“I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.”

If anyone honestly thinks that the contents of the Statement of Faith do not really matter and that in spite of admitted defects it is sufficiently near to the truth to serve its purpose he ought to think again.

Not only are gross errors affirmatively stated as part of “the whole counsel of God,” attested by lists of references which do not prove what is claimed, but some of the most noble truths are characterized as “Fables to be rejected,” e.g., XXV, XXVI, and XXVII. What is worse, its very existence gives license to misguided individuals to advance their own crooked interpretations with the authority of a community behind them.

A monumental example is in a book recently published by A.D.Norris, called “Understanding the Bible” and advertised by “The Christadelphian” as being suitable for a Sunday School prize. There is much that is good in it, but what is bad is so utterly and unbelievably bad that, if we believed in destroying books we should say that this is one that ought to be publicly burned. Actually the best thing that could happen and the worst we wish is for it to be read carefully by every Christadelphian and prospective Christadelphian.

A.D.Norris is certainly adept at dressing up unpleasant characters, but even though they are wearing what might be described figuratively as white tie and tails, the unclean spirits described in the preceding pages are all at the party.

On page 22 will be found the modern version of changed flesh and inherited condemnation:

“Adam and Eve became the physical father and mother of a race of people whose being was in revolt against their Maker.”

This is expressed somewhat differently from what it used to be, but it is no different from the Statement of Faith. The idea of Physical Condemnation is there; is there any other way than the physical by which Adam and Eve might have parented a race? That question alone shows the foolishness of the whole doctrine. Sin-in-the-flesh is there also, in the words “Whose being was in revolt against their Maker.”

One has only to ask one other question to explode the whole business, it is this;

“Were Adam and Eve the physical parents of Abel and was Abel in revolt against his Maker?” That proves that the physical parentage of Adam and Eve did not necessarily produce people whose being was in revolt, and thus destroys the premises on which Norris builds his argument, just as the exposure of “changed flesh” wrecks the conclusions of Robert Roberts and the Statement of Faith.

But, as in the parable the unclean spirits grow progressively wickeder in spite of the garnishing of their house, so here in “Understanding the Bible” we have the most shocking and incredible exposition of the death of Christ which it would be possible to imagine; something far worse than even Robert Roberts at his most extreme ever suggested.

On page 85 this appears;

“This is a serious thought, for it immediately leads to the reflection that, when Jesus hung upon the Cross, it was then that the devil was destroyed; that is, the devil hung there dead.”

Reading such an awful conclusion as that contained in those last five words makes one marvel to what lengths of impious blasphemy people can be driven by an initial fallacy. It has been our fate to read and deal with some shocking statements but never before have we met the equal of this. Let no one say henceforth that Statements of Faith can be ignored or that our conception of Edenic origins does not matter.

A theory of physical condemnation which can lead its professors to the conclusion that when the Son of God gave His life upon the Cross; that Holy One whom He could not suffer to see corruption; the altogether lovely and chiefest among ten thousand, this was the devil hanging there, dead - such a theory needs no more than for this conclusion to be formulated to condemn it utterly and completely.

When the writer was re-baptized some twelve years ago it had become clear to him that this abomination was hidden in the tent, but no one had ever flaunted it like this young Achan.

To-day, under the tutelage of an M.A. D.Phil. (Oxen), F.R.I.C., the issue is a thousand times clearer, and without attempting to account for the lying spirit in the mouth of a prophet qualified by more than half an alphabet, we stand aghast on the other side and call “Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins.”

We have observed that “Understanding the Bible” no longer appears amongst the books available from the Christadelphian office. Whether this indicates that there has been a sufficient volume of protest to cause the Editor to decide that its distribution was ill-advised we have no means of knowing, but it seems unlikely that its omission implies any repentance, for as recently as June 1953, an article in “The Christadelphian” by A.D.Norris advanced the same abhorrent teaching. It was certainly somewhat more mildly expressed, but no less repugnant and we understand that many readers have repudiated his ideas in both the magazine and his book.

Nevertheless, it must be said, the plain truth is that his conclusions are a logical inference from the premises laid down in the Statement of Faith. Their expression is a condemnation, not of their author’s deductive reasoning but of the supposed principle upon which they are based.

In “The Christadelphian” article, A.D.Norris said;

“It became Jesus to die because he had a nature like our own;” he said His flesh had to be “ignominiously shamed:”

he spoke of

“the essential ugliness of the spectacle in which flesh was displayed to show its nature and its due destruction,”

he affirmed that the purpose of Christ’s death was

“that the very fountain from which sin might spring should be sealed”

and he reached what he very well described as

“a suggestion from which reverent minds might well recoil... THE IMPLICATION THAT JESUS WAS SIN.”

Now if it were indeed true that human flesh is intrinsically evil and unclean, and of itself the very cause and origin of sin, then possibly A.D.Norris might be right in his deduction that Jesus was sin and his dreadful suffering and death the right and proper exhibition of what flesh deserves. But in that case no Christadelphian could object to what he writes, and his views, however repulsive they are, ought to be endorsed by all.

On the other hand, if “reverent minds recoil” from the suggestion that Jesus was sin they would do well to ask themselves whether their instinctive reaction is not to be preferred to the guidance of one who appears to be so lost in admiration of his own flights of deductive reasoning that he entirely fails to see that the ground from which he takes off is none other than the apostate doctrine of original sin.

He would do well to ask himself whether it is not man’s character that is at fault, not his flesh.

A man can be of good or bad character according to the way he behaves. The same flesh is capable of manifesting goodness or badness. One man is righteous, another is wicked, but there is no intrinsic or physical difference in the nature or quality of their flesh.

In dealing with the article in question we described the statements (5 of them) quoted above, as blasphemous rubbish and said they revealed “Carterdelphianism” in all its unwashed nakedness- Our strictures have given offence in some directions and we have searched our conscience as to whether we were justified in using such strong language.

Our correspondent writes: “Blasphemy is an ugly word,” and we are bound to agree; but before God it is scarcely ugly enough for the doctrine propounded by A.D.Norris. Indeed, after careful thought and with a full consciousness of the gravity of the indictment, we believe that what he has said in “Understanding the Bible” is nothing less than that sin against the Holy Spirit, which will hardly be forgivable.

We hope for the sake of its author it may not be so, and one’s first instinct is to pass over such awful ideas as one passes over distasteful obscenities in other literature, and hope that greater wisdom and understanding may eventually lead to repentance of such folly. No Christian in his right mind would level such a charge unadvisedly or lightly against another, but the issues are too grave and the false doctrines too deeply entrenched to allow tenderness towards such writings.

It is quite true that people may be sincerely mistaken and their own honest convictions may lead them, as Paul’s led him, to kick against the pricks. To what extent such considerations will excuse the errors of men like A.D.Norris is a matter which only He who sees into the heart can judge; they cannot absolve us who in the mercy of God have learned better, from the obligation to contend earnestly for the faith, and to use every means to awaken the sleepers before it is too late.

These are the last days, perilous times indeed, and when we see one going the way of Cain and Balaam, and leading innocents astray, then it is our duty to use great plainness of speech and, if ugly words alone can meet the situation and bring home the facts, ugly words must be said.

Deep nevertheless as is our conviction that A.D.Norris is promulgating a doctrine of devils, we might have been less emphatic in our denunciation were it not for the fact that there is recorded an almost exact parallel, where Jesus’ own words and the context in which they were spoken leave no doubt whatever about the extreme gravity of what he has written.

In the 12th chapter of Matthew, verses 22-37, there is an account of the healing of a blind mute, which resulted in the Scribes and Pharisees levelling against Jesus the charge that He cast out devils by means of the power of the prince of devils.

Now compare this with what A.D.Norris says in his book, “Understanding the Bible” –

“When Jesus hung upon the Cross, it was then that the devil was destroyed; that is, the devil hung there dead.”

It is quite true that there is a sense in which the devil was destroyed when Jesus hung upon the Cross, because when He paid the penalty of sin for us, the power of the devil to destroy, the bondage of sin and the reign of death, was ended.

But when A.D.Norris gives his idea of how the devil was destroyed, in the words, “That is, the devil hung there dead” it is our considered conviction that he is guilty of the most unspeakable slander against the

Creator which any professing Christian can ever have uttered. With all their vain and unscriptural philosophies, there is no other sect whose errors lead them into so dreadful a perversion of truth.

Certainly, when the Scribes and Pharisees said; “This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” their imputation was not worse than the declaration that on the Cross “the devil hung there dead.”

Even for a writer of the undoubted ability which A.D.Norris displays in some directions, it is well-nigh impossible to argue such an outrageous case in clear unambiguous terms, but it is clear enough from what has been quoted that his theory is either that the devil was in Jesus’ own body, or that the devil was in fact the body ITSELF.

Whichever it be, from his assertion that when Jesus died it left the devil hanging dead on the Cross, it must follow, that a moment before, while Jesus still lived, the devil hung there alive!

Are we allowed to ask the question, when did Jesus become the devil or when did His body become the habitation of the devil? Was He the devil when He was born? Did He become the devil when He was nailed to the Cross, or only when He was dead? Or, since presumably even A.D.Norris would accept the witness of the angel Gabriel that when Jesus was born He was “that Holy thing,” are we to deduce that He gradually turned into the devil during His life? If so, was this the fruit and effect of a life of perfect obedience? That He who commenced life as the Son of God, the Word made flesh, whose glory men beheld as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, who did always those things which pleased His Father, finished up as the devil on the Cross.

Merciful heavens! is this teaching people to “Understand the Bible”? Is this what they call “God-manifestation”? Is this the theology to which the attainment of D.Ph. (Oxen), can lead a man? If so we must thank God for little more than the three R’s and some native common sense.

“The devil hung there dead”... Jesus was sin”... Words fail to express the depth of horror and disgust which such awful suggestions must induce in those who think of Jesus as He revealed Himself to Philip in the question; “Have I been so long with you and yet hast thou not known me?” Jesus claimed to and did in fact reveal the Eternal Father; Norris affirms that He revealed the devil - that He was literally sin. It is difficult to write temperately in the face of such criminal perversity, but in pursuance of the apostolic charge to Timothy we will try to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and patience.

When the Scribes and Pharisees declared that Jesus was in league with the devil, He did not trouble to argue with them about the literal existence of a personal devil; He simply pointed out the foolishness of supposing that Satan would cast out Satan. If His power was a demonic power it was hardly likely He would use it to cast out demons. Similarly if Jesus was the devil is it conceivable He could have submitted to death to destroy Himself? Furthermore if the body which hung upon the Cross was the body of the devil, whose was the body which came forth from the tomb on the resurrection morning?

If the devil hung there dead on the Cross, then the devil rose from the grave three days later, for the body which hung upon the Cross was the body which was raised in the Spirit three days later. So if the devil was destroyed upon the Cross in the way suggested, the devil has been raised and is now alive again and all power in heaven and on earth given into his hands!!

Whether or no such simple logic would make any appeal to one who has received all the advantages to be conferred by a training on the philosophy of Oxford, we cannot tell, but it is Jesus’ own *reductio ad absurdum*.

If when Jesus died the devil hung there dead, then those who put Him to death were the world’s benefactors; and doubtless in his profound understanding of the necessity for “the humiliation of flesh which bore the stamp of rebellion against God,” A.D.Norris would have found that his duty lay with those who were determined to crucify Him.

Let those who accept Christadelphianism as defined by Norris in the statement that Jesus’ flesh “was the seat of potential sin, and to cling to it would have been pride...” let them ask themselves where they

would have stood had they been at His trial. They could not honestly even so much as wash their hands with Pilate - inevitably they must have held His condemnation as just and right!

Indeed, in "Redemption in Christ Jesus" W.F.Barling states categorically and apparently utterly unconscious of its implication, "there was no injustice in his death."

But it was the Apostle Peter who spoke, not of the devil, or of sin, or of flesh in rebellion against God, but of "The Holy and Just, a man approved of God, the Prince of Life, taken by wicked hands and crucified and killed." And this flesh, according to A.D.Norris, unclean, defiled, the seat of potential sin - is it true that Jesus repudiated it? Nonsense. The exact opposite is the case. "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Moreover my flesh also shall repose in hope."

We do not know - and who does - what is meant by flesh bearing the stamp of rebellion against God.

Adam rebelled against God, but when he did so his flesh was still very good, so that it follows that he sinned before his flesh had the supposed stamp of rebellion and therefore it is not necessarily a physical defilement which causes a man to sin. Jesus on the other hand never rebelled against God, yet according to Norris His flesh bore the stamp of rebellion and therefore had to be destroyed, so that even in spite of the supposed physical defilement, the example of Jesus proves that freedom from sin is not impossible.

These are all perfectly simple questions and arguments, and no one needs a college education either to put them or to understand them, but they are more than sufficient to take Mr Norris's case to pieces and expose its defects to the world.

Returning to Matthew 12, it will be seen that Jesus did not leave the matter after pointing out the foolishness of the Scribes and Pharisees. The charge they made was not only a disparagement of Himself personally; speaking against the Son of Man was a grievous sin, but it was not beyond forgiveness. It was what it implied that was infinitely more serious. By implication, their charge against Jesus meant that the Holy Spirit was the source of the Satanic power they said He was using.

This was the occasion of those sombre words to which any one who has been misguided enough to attribute any sort of Satanic relationship to the Son of God would do well to give careful heed.

"Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come."

We neither imagine nor imply that A.D.Norris is moved like the Scribes and Pharisees by personal animus against Jesus, and we can acquit him of any intentional speaking against the Son of Man, but the worst part of the indictment remains.

The basis of his theory and conclusions appears to be disgust with human nature in general; the conviction that human flesh is intrinsically evil, unclean and full of sin; that flesh is in fact the devil. As long as that conviction remained the vague generalized doctrine of Sin-in-the-flesh as held in common by the Roman Catholic Church and Christadelphians, even though it is false and God-dishonouring, it would not perhaps warrant the ugly word we have applied.

But when, with unquestionable logic he proceeds in cold blood to the affirmation that Jesus was sin, that the devil died upon Calvary, then he has placed himself beyond any defence of well-intentioned ignorance. This is a case in which, as one writer has said, "Where the premises are false the best logician is the least safe guide."

Jesus was begotten of God, and one who says Jesus was sin is making God the Creator of Sin. Jesus was God's Son, and anyone who affirms that when He died upon the Cross the devil hung there dead, makes the Almighty God the Father of the devil.

If this is not that awful sin which Jesus warned the Scribes and Pharisees against, words have no longer any meaning.

There may be people whose minds are not equal to the task of following out the implications of the belief that human flesh is literally physically defiled, or who do not immediately appreciate how such a false theory affects Christ in His relationship to God and as a sacrifice for sin, but there can surely be few so undiscerning as to fail to see the foul quagmire into which they are being led by this blind doctor of a false philosophy.

Even Roman Catholics are in a better case; they hold the same false doctrine of original sin as A.D.Norris, but they have the grace to recognize that it was impossible that God's Son should be defiled or unclean and to escape from their dilemma they have invented the Immaculate Conception.

Christadelphians invent an equally unscriptural way of escape, by making a distinction between Jesus' nature and His character, saying He was physically unclean but morally spotless. Years ago Andrew Wilson likened their doctrine of Christ to a conjuring trick with a black and white rabbit; when His nature or flesh is under discussion they produce the black one, but when it is His character, they pop up the white one. Some people regard such a simile as frivolous and undignified but one must admit its pointedness.

We find the same thing in A.D.Norris's book. We have dealt with his statement on page 76 that "his nature... bore the stamp of rebellion against God." This is the black rabbit. Then on page 61 he speaks of "the likeness stamped upon the being of the Son of God." This is the white one.

The truth is that Jesus was a man and as much a unified personality as other men; the only difference was that whereas our life came via a human father His life came direct from a Divine Father. If this resulted in Him bearing the stamp of the likeness of God He could not have borne the stamp of rebellion against God, and vice-versa; Mr Norris cannot have it both ways.

The fact is that both expressions are nothing but meaningless jargon to conceal his own inability to explain his doctrine. We have given our explanation in "God-manifestation."

Jesus also has disposed finally of this ridiculous idea that a man can consist of two opposite and opposed natures. He reproved the Scribes for the same foolishness in the following verses of the chapter (Matthew 12) we have been dealing with, and His words apply with even greater force to those to-day who say that His nature was defiled and full of sin, but His moral character holy.

"Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt... An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, neither can a good tree bring forth evil fruit. By their fruits ye shall know them."

This again is a simple sort of logic with which the teaching of Jesus abounds, and if it was applied it would have prevented A.D.Norris speaking of Jesus' flesh bearing the stamp of rebellion against God.

If we judge the tree by its fruit, then the tree which produced the life of Jesus as its fruits was a good tree.

If the flesh of Jesus was full of evil, the seat of potential sin, the tree was corrupt and could produce only evil fruit.

So, let us have an end of this mixing of incompatible opposites, this unscriptural hotch-potch of physical sin and moral good; either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt.

AMERICARTER

Since the foregoing pages were put into the printer's hands, several very significant matters have come to our notice.

The first is an editorial headed "A Cracked Trumpet" in "The Christadelphian" for March 1955. From this it appears that John Carter has been subjected to considerable criticism on account of the position he took up in his United States tour in order to bring about reunion.

On his own admission he has been charged with having "gone off the rails," being "unfaithful to those who preceded him," even "that he is not truthful," and he quotes a letter saying; "But Brother Carter, lately you are sounding a cracked trumpet... which will lead to error."

Knowing the good work done by the late A.D.Strickler and the strength of the opposition to "sinful flesh" in the U.S., we have certainly been puzzled by the diplomatic success attending John Carter's trip, and have wondered how it was achieved. The second matter of interest suggests the answer.

This was a personal letter from a Christadelphian in California; it is too long to reproduce in full but the following extracts give a fair summary of its import:-

"Dear Friend, There has come into my possession a booklet written by yourself entitled "Carterdelphia - a new apostasy."

Now I hasten to remark that, while I am not in agreement with you on the nature and sacrifice of Christ, I do agree with you to the extent that John Carter and his associates are fast corrupting Christadelphian doctrine with their philosophy... they are drifting towards evolution and modernism... the famous (or should I say, infamous) address which John Carter delivered all over the U.S. and Canada and later at the Jersey City Reunion Conference, was nothing more than a carefully worded discourse so framed as to be acceptable both to clean flesh advocates and Bereans - the Strickler group later said; "It writes out everything Brother Carter has ever said on the subject previously..." Recently it was revealed that a large group at Boston (and doubtless they are but a few of the many in the Central group in America) were still teaching the Strickler clean flesh doctrines. This caused a hue and cry from some of the Bereans who had gone into fellowship with them, but Carter came to their defence and appears to have settled the matter by an expert job of whitewashing... It is possible you are overlooking the fact that you have many adherents to your doctrines in the Central fellowship, and that you and John Carter are not as far apart as you think. Yours sincerely..."

If we could really think there was any truth in that last phrase, we would cut off our hand before we would say anything which might be regarded as a rebuff - the last thing we would wish is to quench the smoking flax - but we are bound to say we think our correspondent misreads the evidence.

Whatever he may have said in the United States, so far as we can see John Carter is completely hostile to us and all we stand for. Our literature is proscribed, our members are maligned, and instant action is taken to disfellowship anyone who voices our views. There is an instance of this in the very issue we are quoting from, in the Birmingham (Erdington) intelligence, and the hostility is not confined to the Central fellowship, for the same person was asked by the Suffolk St. fellowship to refrain from distributing his own essay on the subject!! To what an amazing state the Christadelphian world has come!

As our correspondent says, we may have many adherents in the U.S. unknown to us, though as we said in regard to those in Australia, we cannot see how anyone can honestly claim to believe as we do and yet be content to call themselves Christadelphians. There may also be some in the Central Fellowship here who lean to our view but we have hitherto seen no reason to suppose John Carter is amongst them. Our diagnosis of the situation would rather be that there are many in his fellowship, including himself, who, try as they will, can find no way to refute our teaching and have been reduced to closing their eyes and ears.

It may well be, and the contents of the March editorial lend colour to the possibility, that the strength of the opposition to “sinful Flesh” and Clause 5 which John Carter encountered abroad has increased his respect for the so-called clean flesh heresy and forced him to moderate his hostility, but we do not feel we shall be doing him an injustice if we regard him as motivated more by expediency than conviction, since there is and will ever remain, an irreconcilable conflict between what the Statement of Faith lays down and what we believe to be the truth.

As the reader will have seen, the sole purpose of this book has been to high-light the utter and complete contrast between our conception of the nature of man and the sacrifice of Christ and that revealed by John Carter in the pages of “The Christadelphian.” And only his renunciation of the errors which we have described earlier as seven unclean spirits of doctrine could bring us into line. Whether this is a likely event is a matter of opinion; if as it appears to our American correspondent, a member of his own fellowship having no reason so far as we know, to misrepresent him, he has given the impression of being prepared to tolerate our view, perhaps this indicates that he is moving in the right direction, but he will have to make some very big meals of his own words and deal with some very difficult characters before peace reigns.

His duty as an editor - perhaps even pure interest - no doubt compels him to study carefully the literature circulated by The Nazarene Fellowship, and while it must often be very little to his liking, there can be no question that its unanswerable logic and lucid reasoning will get through to the mind eventually in spite of everything, and without boasting we believe it can truthfully be said that generally speaking there is more plain, simple and straightforward application of Scripture and bold factual argument on almost any page of Nazarene literature than in many a whole book. The reason of this is not far to seek – we have the Truth, and however it may be turned about and from whatever angle we approach it, it stands up firm and clear and unassailable. We do not need to be careful of what we say in one context, or how we say it, for fear of contradicting ourselves in another; this is the bugbear of “The Christadelphian” and no doubt even a man in the difficult position of its editor is incapable of complete imperviousness to that which proceeds out of the mouths of babes and sucklings if it be truth.

It certainly appears now that the writer who charged John Carter with sounding a cracked trumpet was not too wide of the mark. His editorial apology (page 107) contains what we have never seen before in “The Christadelphian” - quotations from the works of both Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts, wherein they both admit that man was corruptible at his creation and before he sinned.

Brother Fred Pearce of Newbridge has been patiently plugging these passages for nearly 20 years as evidence of the fundamental contradiction in Christadelphian teaching, but hitherto their very existence has been ignored or else they have been dismissed as temporary aberrations on the part of their authors. It has been a surprise to us, and it will have been an unpleasant shock to many of his own following, to see them now produced by John Carter with the avowed object of justifying the position he took up in the United States.

Whether the use of these quotations indicates a change of mind or whether he has produced them simply to escape from an awkward predicament it is impossible to say, but from our point of view the mere fact that he has advanced them is a most tremendous victory. We can only wonder to what extent he realised the admissions he was making when he wrote the following paragraph: -

“Secondly, we did not quote the ‘one occasion Dr Thomas contradicted himself.’ We quoted from Elpis Israel, which has just passed its hundred years of circulation. We suggested some of his language in two adjoining paragraphs was not free from difficulty: “It is probable Adam and Eve would have died after a long time” - and mark the added words, “if no further change had been operated upon their nature.” “The animal nature will sooner or later dissolve.” “We may admit the corruptibility, and consequent mortality, of their nature, without saying that they were mortal” – in other words, unless a word is used in two senses, which indeed may be, they were two opposite things at the same time. Our point is, we are wise to accept what is written: man was a ‘natural body’ when made. (1 Corinthians 15:44,45)”.

How often have we been vilified for saying no more than this:- “not free from difficulty” is only a euphemism for “contradictory” - and suggesting the wisdom of accepting what is written? The first leaflet we wrote said little more than this, yet John Carter spoke of it as the work of “a renegade brother.” The points he has made in the above extract are exactly what we have advanced in controversy with W.F.Barling, and anyone who can refer to his articles “Redemption in Christ Jesus,” published by John Carter in 1946, will find them described as “plausible but specious.” Now that John Carter has discovered that man was a “natural body” when made and is prepared to admit his corruptibility even before he sinned, and that even had he remained obedient he would probably “have died after a long time,” perhaps even Feed Barling will be prepared to admit that they are rather more “plausible” and less “specious” than he thought.

Unfortunately for John Carter’s future peace as an editor, his admissions are in complete opposition to the Statement of Faith and to the commonly accepted idea of what the Doctor and R.Roberts taught.

We think that consciously (as we could wish) or unconsciously (which may serve) he is giving expression to what he has learned from the work of Edward Turney and the Clean Flesh controversy. God be praised if this is the case; we think, however, that at present he may be going through a similar process to ourselves some twelve years ago - the painful one of realising that we have been wrong. He can see the force of our reasoning with half his mind, and has so far accepted it as to be able to compromise with American “Clean Flesh,” but with the other half he clings, like his predecessors, to physical sin-in-the-flesh.

He says Dr. Thomas’s words are “not free from difficulty” but he does not help his readers to the extent of suggesting how the difficulty can be removed - obviously because either he does not know and cannot, or because - if he knows, he dare not. He falls back on a cliché - the wisdom of accepting what is written, that man was created “a natural body.” This is not even honestly discharging his duties as an editor to his readers, far less of an elder and teacher to his flock. As we have shown in “Death for Sin” earlier and in the pamphlet “Too True to be New,” if we have the wisdom to accept what is written we shall have to abandon the idea that corruptibility is the penalty of sin.

Dr. Thomas’s mistake and John Carter’s difficulty arise from the mistaken assumption that corruptibility and mortality are interchangeable terms; they are not. Corruptible means capable of death though not necessarily destined to die, as opposed to incorruptible, which means undying. Mortal means subject to death by law - or under sentence of death, as opposed to immortal., not subject to death. So that a person may be corruptible but not mortal, as was Adam at his creation; or corruptible and mortal, as was Adam after transgression. Or a person may be corruptible and immortal, as was Jesus in His natural life, and as are the true saints in Christ now; or incorruptible and immortal as was Jesus when He came from the tomb and as the saints will be after they are raised and/or changed.

After quoting Dr. Thomas’s words admitting that Adam would probably have died after a long time (and was not 930 years a long time? -E.B.), John Carter goes on: “When created man was very good, as God declared. He was tried by an external tempter and failed, and then realized shame and guilt and fear of God.”

Now, we can agree 100% with this; it is Scripture. But what about the Statement of Faiths’ “implantation of physical decay giving a bias in the direction of sin and working out dissolution and death”? What about W.F.Barling’s “physically infected flesh and vitiated nature”? What about A.D.Norris’s “fountain of sin” and “flesh in rebellion”? What a position the Editor is in!

He says again, in Dr. Thomas’s words; “Mortality and immortality were set before them as possibilities.” True again; but then he says; “This has the support of Paul - for he says, ‘By man come death’.” This is laughable. He knows that his readers - and himself till now - believe that this refers to natural death - or corruptibility, and the very purpose of his quotations from Dr.Thomas is to show that corruptibility and eventual natural death were man’s condition at his creation and before he sinned.

Perhaps he has his tongue in his cheek - he is certainly either disingenuous in the extreme or unbelievably naive.

Does he make the least attempt to meet the questionings in the minds of his readers? Not a bit of it. He says; “on these facts we insist and will continue to do so,” and instantly goes on to quote one of the several passages in which Robert Roberts also wrote in the same devastatingly contradictory fashion.

He says;

“But the first editor, at the end of a life of contention, and not long after he had penned the synopsis in which he says:- ‘Death... was not inherent in him before sentence,’ also wrote ‘Man’s state after creation.’ - He 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.”

The mind that produced that, like the mind that reproduced it, was in a state of complete confusion and manifests a total failure to distinguish between man’s natural condition and his relationship to God. There is only one solution, which we have given in Section 2 - the death which came by sin was not natural death or corruptibility, but sentence of execution - a judicial death, involving alienation from God and eventual violent extinction.

Remember, this is the Editor of “The Christadelphian,” writing in March 1955, and quoting these extracts to defend his present or expressed views, in which it is confessed that the basic point of Christadelphian doctrine concerning man’s nature is “A matter of opinion about which no man can be certain.”

Where this places Dick Bull, Peter Barnard, Bill Woodley, Les Jennings and old Uncle Tom Cobby and all who insist that natural death is the wages of sin, they will have to decide for themselves, but their old grey mare certainly looks like the deadest kind of cat’s meat.

The third matter to which we must refer is a short note in the April “Christadelphian” (page 143) concerning a 3 penny pamphlet written by A.D.Norris entitled “What we stand for.” We have dealt at some length with what Christadelphian’s will stand for from this author, in “Doctrine of Devils,” so that it is interesting to note that even John Carter regards this as unsuitable for his pages and takes exception to one sentence, which he quotes in a footnote, as follows:- “When Adam sinned he was condemned both to a death in the sight of God and to a physical death. The decree was ‘Thou shall surely die;’ ‘Dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return’.”

What this sentence really means we cannot say - and we very much doubt whether even its author could either. We have before remarked that A.D.Norris is rather addicted to expressions which upon analysis prove to be pompous rhetoric. However, it presumably conveys something to John Carter, since he cannot agree with it. We feel sure this is highly significant but must confess that it is beyond us to say exactly what it is significant of! What makes it interesting from our point of view is that it indicates a tendency on the part of the Editor to be somewhat cautious of A.D.Norris, and we can only regard this with approval.

Whether there is any rift between them we do not know, but it will be very remarkable if John Carter’s March editorial does not produce some startling changes. The drift of A.D.Norris’s mind proves that his spiritual home is the Roman Catholic Church, and it would not surprise us if, like some other crackpot intellectuals he ended up there.

LAST WORD

“No man, speaking by the Spirit, calleth Jesus accused.”

It will no doubt have come as a shock to many inoffensive people to find their faith criticised from so many directions. Like the writer, they may have grown up with the idea that their beliefs are synonymous with the word of God and they will have come to regard what is spoken of as “The Truth” as unassailable.

The substance, however, of much of the matter in this book has been the subject of discussion and controversy in Christadelphian circles from the very beginning, and little of it is really new. If it comes as a surprise to the reader the blame must lie with those leaders who have used every device to prevent “the rank and file” from obtaining a fair and unbiased view of any point which might lead them to question their position.

All that the writer has done is to bring together the various matters which have caused strife from time to time and which still constantly crop up and show how they all stem from a single false principle and all converge in the most astonishing and hopeless misconceptions of all time.

We have tried to show that the real cause of the trouble is the Statement of Faith and so long as this remains the definition of Christadelphianism, so long will strife continue and so long will it be required of faithful men that they cry aloud and spare not.

Even to-day, when a brother or a sister or a group realize what Christadelphianism commits them to and ask questions in their ecclesia, they are either silenced by terrible warnings or threats of withdrawal or, if they persist and are finally disfellowshipped, all that is published is that they no longer uphold the Truth and the rumour is spread that they believe Christ had a different nature. No one lets the cat out of the bag that this is just a bogey-man to prevent the children asking awkward questions about how sin can be literally in flesh or why Christ had to die for Himself.

We are sometimes asked why, instead of constantly attacking Christadelphian teaching, we do not content ourselves with a simple positive statement of the beliefs of the Nazarene Fellowship. There are two answers:

1) We have done so repeatedly but it so frequently happens that a Christadelphian hearing or reading it says, “But that is exactly what I believe,” it is only when the implications of their own principles are forced home upon them that it is apparent that there is a gulf as wide as an ocean between us.

2) We concentrate upon Christadelphians because in the present world they are the people who most stand in need of the enlightenment we can give.

They are the counterpart or parallel of the Jews of Christ’s day. The Jews rejected the Holy One and the Just and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. Similarly, Christadelphians reject the true Christ - the Holy One and the Just, preferring one under the same curse as themselves, one who was made sin, one who was the embodiment of Satan. People who believe such things are in worse case than the unenlightened. (Hebrews 10:29). Therefore we believe they, above all, stand in need of the ministrations of those who can show them the true Prince of Life and the meaning of His Sacrifice.

It is not therefore out of any personal feeling or love of controversy that we have criticised the statements and beliefs of Christadelphians, but purely from the necessities of the case. If we had argued as a theoretical case, that the logical outcome of the doctrine that sin was literally in the flesh of Jesus is that it was the Devil who died upon the Cross, most Christadelphians would have scoffed at the suggestion. Indeed, we made the experiment and put the question to a Christadelphian friend, who by the way has no leaning towards our view, asking what he would say of anyone who affirmed that when Jesus died, the devil hung there dead. He replied: “I should say anyone who said that was mad.”

That is why it is necessary for us to quote and reiterate the actual words of the Christadelphian who says it, and even though we have produced the evidence and given the source and context there will still be many who disbelieve it and say we are twisting things and indulging in personalities.

It does not matter that possibly very few will ever read "Understanding the Bible," or that even a majority might reject A.D.Norris's conclusions. The thing that is significant is that they are the conclusions of a responsible Christadelphian from Christadelphian principles and as such we have no alternative but to expose and resist them by every means at our command.

The truth about clean flesh is that the so-called heretics do not believe that the flesh of Jesus was any different from ours; as we have shown, the boot is in on the other leg. In their explanation of how Jesus, by His birth, received a special strength to enable Him to overcome sin, they are actually guilty of the very thing they charge us with.

We do not believe that flesh as such is either clean or unclean; men who are under condemnation because of sin are unclean in a legal sense; men who are no longer under condemnation and whose sins are forgiven are clean in a legal sense. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." John 13:10.

Jesus was never either a sinner or under condemnation and it is therefore quite wrong to affirm of Him that "He was as unclean as those whom He came to save." That is why the Apostle Paul says; "wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit calleth Jesus accursed." It is infinitely worse - it is unforgivable - to say that He was the Diabolos.

This is the monumental error of Christadelphianism - it has never been more clearly demonstrated than in the work referred to in the last chapter - and we dare to predict that those who consciously hold it will not find acceptance at His return by the One whom it so grievously dishonours; while even those who disapprove but fail to make their protests heard will have cause for sorrow.

The Free-life theory does not imply that the life of Jesus was intrinsically any different from the life of any other man.

It simply means that as the Son of God He was born free from the legal disability or alienation which passes upon all whose life is derived from Adam.

Jesus was the seed of the woman, raised up by a miracle as a member of the human family, and it is therefore correct to speak of Him as the Son of Man. it is not correct to speak of Him as the Son of Adam for the simple reason that God was His Father. No man ever had two fathers, and a person's life, name and inheritance comes from his father. Since there is only one kind of flesh of man, and the same kind of breath and life animates them all, in all physical respects Jesus was identical with all other men.

Morally He was superior to all other men, because He did no sin, but it was not this moral superiority which He sacrificed on the Cross. It enabled Him to retain the right to the life which He received at His birth and proved Him a perfect man. "Being made perfect (by His life of trial) He became the author of eternal salvation."

The vital fact which alone qualified Him to surrender Himself as an offering for the sin of the world, was the fact that His life was unforfeited and was His own to give.

If belief of these facts constitutes a heresy - then we are heretics and happy to be so. But we are persuaded that anyone who has read these pages and who will think about even such a familiar passage as that with which we conclude them, will be bound to admit that Clean Flesh is not so black as it is painted

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich (in His inheritance, as the Son of God), yet for our sakes he became poor (when He gave up that life which was His own) that we through His poverty, might become rich."

Ernest Brady. I 955

