

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 174

November/December 1998

In This Issue:-

Page 1 Editorial	Sister Helen Brady
Page 2 Miscellanea	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 4 The Two Gardens - Exhortation	Brother Leo Dreifuss
Page 6 Brother Phil Parry writes to	Brother John Stevenson
Page 8 Some Matters of Interest from two Christadelphians	
Page 10 Brother "D" asks a Question of Brother "S"	
Page 11 "What Is Going On?" - Comments on the Editorial of October Issue of "The Christadelphian."	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 13 Further Comments on the Editorial	Brother Phil Parry
Page 16 A Christadelphian Becomes a Pastor	Pastor Mike Holmes
Page 17 Letter to Pastor Mike Holmes	Brother Phil Parry
Page 19 Reply to Phil Parry	Pastor Mike Holmes
Page 22 Letter to Mike Holmes	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 24 2nd Letter to Mike Holmes - (Including article on the Epistle to the Romans)	Brother Phil Parry

Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings.

When recently interviewed, the Jewish American author Saul Bellow made some remarks that were rather revealing. Apparently when he was a child he was in hospital for a year. Ladies from missionary societies used to visit the hospital and distribute Bibles. In this way Saul came into possession of the New Testament, which he was delighted to read, he said. "Of course, I had to keep my discovery of the New Testament from my parents. They would have been appalled and outraged. My heart went out to Jesus, but I knew that I must never mention this to my family or they would be vexed." Later in the same interview Saul was asked how he felt about death, as he is now 83 years old: the interviewer remarked that another writer D.H.Lawrence, longed for death, because he thought it preferable to life because there were no people in it. Saul said "What will it all have meant and what is the life to come, if any? These are the things - naive things no doubt - but they do plague you; will I see my parents again?" The interviewer asked "Do you believe in an after-life?" Saul replied, "Well, it's impossible to believe because there are no rational grounds for it, but how agreeable it would be to see my mother and father again and my brothers. But then I think of eternity waiting for us. How long would these moments of reunion last? You'd still have to face eternity as a conscious something or other, a conscious soul... so the only thing I can think of is that we might become God's apprentices elsewhere in the universe and have the real secrets of the universe revealed to us. That would be a wonderful way to spend eternity."

How sad that Saul Bellow could not tell his parents that he had read the New Testament with such delight and that his heart went out to Jesus. My father had a Jewish business friend, a cloth merchant in Manchester. They talked on the telephone regularly and often about Israel, for Moshe returned to Israel several times a year and encouraged my father to visit there too. Father always replied that he would get there eventually when Jesus the Messiah returned to sit on the throne of David. When asked if he had read the New Testament, Moshe said no, and he never would: a perfect echo of Saul Bellow's parents attitude of 70 years ago.

Believers and Bible students would not say as Saul Bellow said that belief in what he called an "after-life" was irrational. We know that the life to come is a reality for Jesus is an historical figure and He died and rose again from the dead, the Bible tells us so.

But it is easy to sympathize with Saul's feelings about eternity. It is indeed a daunting prospect. We do not really have the minds to comprehend it. We must take it on trust, knowing that what God has lovingly prepared for those that seek Him will be completely acceptable and appropriate when the time comes. I think Saul Bellow is probably right when he says we shall be God's apprentices, but here on this earth and also maybe elsewhere in the universe and perhaps the secrets of the universe will be revealed to us.

But however it is looked at eternity is a concept difficult to grasp and not something that seems entirely desirable from our present perspective and with our limited and finite view of things. It is impossible to imagine how it will feel to be unaware of our bodies, never to be tired or unwell, physically or mentally weak in any way, but to be powerful in the true sense of the word. As Shakespeare put it in a comparable context, "'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Love to all from Helen Brady.

MISCELLANAE

Please note one error and one query in the last C.L.

The spelling error is on page 6 in Sister Evelyn Linggood's article, "Born Again" where in the ninth line, the word "literally" should read "literality"

The query arose on page 26, in reply to Ron Coleman, where I wrote "Jesus entered heaven with His own blood." This was meant to be understood as a metaphor. It could not literally be true because Christ's blood was shed while on the Cross.

Neither is it correct to say that "Jesus entered heaven by His own blood," as is claimed by some, because He could have entered heaven without going through the ordeal of crucifixion, and I think we can see this in Luke 9:51, - "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up..." we do not find Him being taken up, instead, "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" where He offered Himself as the Lamb of God to take away the Sin of the world.

By way of further explanation we turn to Hebrews chapter 9 where the writer is comparing and contrasting the High Priesthood under the Mosaic Law with the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. When an High Priest under the Mosaic Law entered one day each year into the Holy of Holies he had to take with him some of the blood of the sacrifice to sprinkle on the Altar in the Holy of Holies. The life being in the blood this signified that an offering of a life had been made for Atonement. Jesus Christ was Himself the Offering given by God, and His resurrection signified acceptance of His one true and effectual Offering for Atonement and so was He received into the Holiest of all, even Heaven itself there to be with His Father as High Priest and Mediator for His people,

* * *

A few weeks ago I sent off a subscription to a magazine and with the magazine I received a note which read, "All contributions to the magazine remain the property of the authors - so, if you wish to reprint all or any part of any article it would be appreciated if you would contact the Editor."

This has prompted me to repeat our policy, which is that anyone can use any articles by Nazarene Fellowship writers printed in the Circular Letters in any way they wish without recourse to the Editors or anyone else. We do this because we cannot claim any copyright for the things we have learned of God and it is our heart's desire to publish the Circular Letters to the honour and glory of God, His Son and His Word. Freely we have received, freely we give.

* * *

I have received a letter from Brother Andrew Wilson who, having read the correspondence between Brethren Ron Coleman and John Stevenson in C.L.172 was prompted to write:-

“Re dispelling myths (C.L.172, page 17, § 4 and page 18, §§ 1 & 2), - the Author of “The History of The Christadelphians 1864 to 1885” is myself. I am a different person from the author A.N.Wilson (now deceased), from the Science editor of The Observer, and the Andrew Wilson who works in a London theatre. For a number of years I have been a member of the Crewe (Central) ecclesia in Cheshire, having been baptized on October 28th 1961 at Heckmondwike, West Yorkshire, U.K.

The Andrew L. Wilson best known to the Nazarene Fellowship for his excellent booklets such as “Jesus My Substitute,” “From Eden to Gethsemane” and “Jesus At The Bar,” etc., was the nephew of Benjamin Wilson known to so many Bible students throughout the world for his “Emphatic Diaglott.”

* * *

In the two previous C.L.s we have asked for discussion regarding Essay No. 4, “Ye Must Be Born Again,” of the “Eight Bible Essays.” There is not a consensus of opinion amongst us and as Brother Leo has observed, “There has not been a great deal of response to date... We now have opinions ranging over two, three and four births.... There appears to be no unified view... It seems we shall have to agree to differ and wait until the Lord’s return.” However, Sister Evelyn Linggood has written to say,

“...surely the Spirit life is the most important; this is our hope is it not? Eternal life - the Gift of God, but we cannot have this without being first begotten by God, this being ratified by our birth of water whereby we die unto sin and rise again to newness of life, but it is the same flesh and blood life whereas in the resurrection we are given a new body energized by the Spirit - truly a new birth. Why was Jesus said to be the first-born from the dead if it were not a Birth?”

In the last C.L. I briefly touched on the problems relating to the one Greek word, gennao, meaning either “born” or “begotten;” and to add to the problem I find that the word protokos is translated both “first-born” and “first-begotten,” for in Colossians 1:18 we read, “He is the head of the body... the first-born (protokos) from the dead,” to which Sister Evelyn refers, and in Revelation 1:5 we read, “Jesus Christ... the first begotten (protokos) of the dead.”

We know that Jesus Christ came to give us second birth but we ask, did He also need second birth Himself. If we consider the resurrection as a birth then the answer is, yes He did, and this then means two births for Jesus Christ and three births for us. However, if we understand the “firstborn from the dead” and “first begotten of the dead” to mean “the firstfruits of the dead” as in 1 Corinthians 15:20, then the answer is no. In this case Jesus Christ had only one birth and there are two births for us.

It is my opinion that our second birth took place when we were convinced of the need for baptism and at baptism we died to Adam-life and rose to newness of life in Jesus Christ. Paul said “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This surely is our second birth, while our change to immortality, both for those asleep in Christ and those living when He returns, is not truly another birth but rather a continuation of our newness of life, or Spirit life in Jesus Christ, - “I am come they might have life (spirit life here and now) and have it more abundantly” in the resurrection - in glorified bodies and with minds that are no longer tempted with wrong doing. Personally, I don’t see this as a new birth in the way Sister Evelyn does but I wouldn’t say her view is wrong, for indeed a change to incorruptibility is after all, an immense change. However, I would consider our mental change, our change of heart and mind, is the all important change which God desires of us, and this comes about by being in Christ - not our will, but God’s will be done. This continues into our Eternal life if by the grace of God it be granted us. (Alternatively I suppose we could consider that our baptism represents the time of our begetting by God and our time of probation here and now equates to a period of gestation, and then the change to incorruptible nature could be considered as our second birth, but still this only allows for two births and not three).

No one now seems to think there are four births as stated by our late Brother Fred Lea in Essay No. 4 and we are left with finding a suitable note to insert at the beginning of this essay for when it is next printed.

With this C.L. we are sending out a booklet containing two letters by our late Brother Ernest Brady. These letters have been published before, soon after the time of writing, but we are responding to those of you who have asked for more diverse reading, such as how we may deal with the false beliefs of other denominations besides Christadelphians, whenever we may be faced by them. Recently we briefly touched on some Jehovah's Witnesses teaching, while the correspondence we have had with a Pastor which is presented in this present issue of the Circular Letter is complemented by these two letters in dealing with Trinitarian teaching.

Brother Ray Gregory writes:-

“Dear Russell, I am glad to see you have decided to draw a line under the correspondence with Ron Coleman. There are enough simple words and phrases in the Scriptures for us to understand the Gospel message, and if we choose them to head our discussions I am sure we would all benefit.

The most precise language was used by Our Lord in explaining His mission to save all who would do His Father's will. He told His disciples, “Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.” This sentence is one of superlatives; “greater” is understood as “greatest” because of its context; “love” is the greatest attribute a man can possess, and life is his ultimate possession.

Jesus also said “I give my life for the sheep, therefore doth my Father love me” and to “give His life a ransom for many.”

Again, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

There are many plain words and phrases of our Lord which can only be understood in their primary meaning and to attempt to seek metaphorical meanings would undermine the reality of the work of God in Christ and reduce the solid rock foundation to one of sand.

I am sure that over the years many Christadelphian brethren and sisters have, at the end of a Sunday evening lecture, prayed for a more complete understanding of Scripture and during the course of their lives experienced on occasions, the pleasure of perceiving the true gospel message of redemption and have been as excited as a child who has taken their first step or made themselves understood for the first time.

The simple words and statement of our Lord are our main platform on which we see the Gospel message, and if we keep His words before us our feet will not slip and our minds will be refreshed and our hope remain firm.”

Finally, Brother Phil and Sister Rene Parry have asked that I should “Please convey our Kind Regards to all brethren and sisters through the medium of the C/L with our Hope that our joy in Christ will soon be fulfilled by His coming.”

Brother Russell Gregory

The Two Gardens

There are two gardens mentioned in the Word of God, each of great importance with respect to man's relation to God, especially man's reaction to temptation. The Garden of Eden where sin first entered into the world with all its dire consequences, and later, Gethsemane, where the second Son of God, by resisting temptation paved the way to man's redemption from death for sin.

Let us first consider Eden. Come to think of it, the temptation of Adam and Eve was nothing out of the ordinary. It was the sort of thing we all experience in our younger days, or perhaps not so young. Just

imagine God saying “Don’t eat of that tree; don’t touch it.” And then comes along the serpent saying “Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” So God is questioned; a doubt enters Eve’s mind, and then the lie “Ye shall not surely die.” That wicked lie which has persisted to our day in the form of the doctrine of the immortal soul.

I often compare the situation in Eden with that of bringing up a child. The father says, “Don’t touch that kettle, you will get burned.” Now previously perhaps the child took no particular notice of the kettle and very likely did not even know what getting burned was like. But now curiosity is aroused and he sees his parents handling it without coming to any harm. So he is tempted to touch it - he says to himself “why shouldn’t I? Look at mum and dad, they are none the worse for it,” So here we see father’s command questioned. Doubt, curiosity and temptation have entered the child’s mind. How right was Paul when he wrote to the Romans (3:20), “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” It is happening throughout one’s childhood days. Tell a youngster not to do a thing and he will do it out of sheer curiosity, and delight in playing a prank. Say nothing, and whatever you prohibited will probably never be attempted anyway. Coming back to the child; he does of course, not realize that when his parents handle the kettle it is not hot, or else with a cloth. But one day the child touches it when it contains boiling water. Now he found out what will happen and what it feels like being burned. He has now discovered the hard way that dad was right after all. But after things have calmed down, the dressing of the burn and forgiveness by the parents with the admonition not to do it again.

Now is not this the parallel with the happenings in Eden? Just as a child did not know what being burned is like so the first pair never saw nor experienced an inflicted death. They might, but we cannot speculate about this, have seen animals and birds dying a natural death. Now after the forbidden act, a guilty conscience, shame, experience of sin. They had now discovered the consequences of God’s law being flouted. And worse to come, an animal, or animals killed, blood poured out. What terror this must have struck into the minds of Adam and Eve. But then forgiveness, the temporary covering of their sin and the promise of some future redemption when God said to the serpent, Genesis 3:15, “It (the woman’s seed) shall bruise thy head.”

Just how much of God’s plan of redemption the first pair understood we do not know except that there evidently was held out some hope of better things to come, just as is the case of a child the parents forgive but without condoning the child’s misdeed. We see from all this that there is no need for a supernatural Satan. Temptation frequently originates from external influences and matures in the mind if we allow it. Just as we read in James’ epistle (1:14,15), “But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

And this is where we come to consider the trial that took place in the second Garden. The temptation of Jesus, in principle, was no different from the one described above, but on a far, far larger scale. External influence, followed by the mind processing it. But in Jesus’ case He did not allow sin in to take hold. And how did He conquer it? By constant meditation of the words of His Father and reference to it when needed. And how great trials He suffered’ First in the wilderness, then during His ministry being sneered at by hostile crowds and the Pharisees, forsaken by His disciples except the twelve apostles, and finally Gethsemane. And how did He conquer temptation? Let those who say that on account of his miraculous birth He was able to resist temptation in a way we can’t, having been equipped with special strength not available to us, consider these two points:

1) He constantly used the Scriptures as His guide by constant meditation, absorbing it in His mind, which practice by itself keeps evil thoughts out of it. Impossible for us? No? There is some good practical advice on many things in the Old Testament. Let us look only at the Psalms and the Proverbs, and we have in addition the New Testament at our disposal, just to look at Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 13 as only a few examples.

2) He was a man of constant prayer. Impossible for us? No. We can, with God’s help, master many a task or awkward situation if we put it to God in prayer, but let us remember to thank Him when we have got out of it; and also don’t forget, Jesus spent many hours in prayer. Do we at least pray regularly even when not in immediate danger? Do we follow Christ’s example in this respect?

No, the miraculous birth was not for the purpose of giving Christ extra strength. Had this been so, this would not have been a fair trial. The miraculous birth was to raise up a second Adam with a free life unforfeited to sin, and so be able to provide a ransom for those who accept Him. Adam forfeited his life, he let temptation get the better of him – and how little a trial compared with Christ's. Only not to eat of a certain fruit, that was all. The Israelites' promise on Mount Sinai did not last so long either. They got panicky when Moses was delayed. Saul's sin was similar when Samuel was late. Let us admit we do silly things when we get worried and panicky. But Christ never let these things beat Him.

Finally to His temptation in Gethsemane. This was different and much more severe than all trials in history. His life kept sin-free, unlike Adam's. No need for Him to die, He had legions of angels at His instant command. What a temptation it must have been to say just a word to His Father, though of course this would not have been sin as there was no commandment to the contrary but it was against His Father's will, and by asking for those angels He could have been well and away. But no. This would have been disastrous for all of us. He knew that His Father would wish Him to go through with it and with an incredible will power sustained by prayer He made it.

What of us? We all know that the concept of sin-in-the-flesh, or original sin provides a good excuse for many misdeeds. We, by the mercy of God know better but we nevertheless make excuses for ourselves. What about the phrase "I couldn't help it"? If we are honest it is us who just do not try hard enough.

Finally let us count our blessing of having had our eyes opened to the truth and the prophecy being fulfilled in our days. And when we fall, our Great High Priest will intercede if we sincerely repent.

As a fitting conclusion, another piece of advice as found in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

Whilst we have drawn a line under our correspondence with Brother Ron Coleman we print below part of a letter from Brother Phil Parry to Brother John Stevenson concerning that correspondence and which we feel may be of more than passing interest to our readers:

Dear Brother John, Warmest Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus... I have read Ron Coleman's presented views and your comments but I have to admit to a limited education on the grammatical side and do not therefore make too much play upon words used in modern day language as distinct from those used in the Scriptures. One example mentioned is "world." In most cases in Scripture this means the inhabitants of the earth qualified by what is said about them; for example the Apostle James says "Love not the world," and he goes on to describe the reason. Noah by his faith and works condemned the world (sinners) not the earth. Peter said, "The world that then was, being overflowed with water perished," but the earth did not perish. So in regard to G.B.Caird's "Language and Imagery of the Bible," instructive as it may well be, I feel quite able under God's guidance to read and rightly divide what He has caused to be written for my well-being and salvation. I well remember our late Brother Fred Pearce saying how important it is to discriminate when reading the Bible. This is why I avoid using the term or expression "Sin is lawlessness," because the term "Sin" in my view applies only to those who are under Divine Law by enlightenment and in covenant relationship with God such as Israel under Moses' Law, - others were sinners by constitution firstly, and secondly by idolatrous practices of ignorance and vile affections which God gave them over to (Romans 1:18-32). "Lawlessness" would no doubt cover what Paul describes here, because many of them having known Divine Law, rejected it in order to gratify the unregenerated minds of the flesh. The main point I want to make is for example, driving my car I ignore the traffic signal displaying Red and drive on. In doing so I have violated man's law and highway code, but this cannot be described as "Sin," for sin is transgression of Divine Law.

We know that under the Mosaic Law sins of ignorance are mentioned but not imputed unless brought to the notice of the person who committed the offence who could then do the required act for forgiveness,

The class mentioned in Romans chapter 1 are almost in a similar situation, for God enlightens them in some way before He brings judgments upon them. We have examples of this in Noah's day, in the days of Lot, and with Jonah who warned the Ninevites. Paul also declares, "God has appointed a day to judge the world by Jesus Christ and therefore has commanded all men everywhere to repent."

Now that is an important point you may not have impressed enough upon Ron Coleman, and most probably Christadelphians are not wise to it. They quote Peter's words to the Jews "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." Peter meant their personal sins because they were under the Mosaic covenant when Jesus was crucified and were therefore responsible. This did not apply to Gentiles who were aliens and yet constituted sinners legally, by imputation and not by personal sin.

Christadelphians stumble over the Federal teaching of Paul in Romans 5, and take him to be saying Adam's natural death came by sin and was a penalty passed upon all his descendants; thus they confuse Genesis and Romans 5:12 and in so doing, the death of Jesus as a substitute for the death Adam incurred is beyond their understanding. Yet they fail also to see that the term "Representative" cannot harmonize with the animal sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Law and previously from Adam.

The lamb slain to provide the covering for Adam's sin did not represent Adam, it was a substitute-life not forfeited to the Law, and which God provided. An animal life, in the place of a human life, which was only a provisional transaction until a human life unforfeited and free from the bondage of Sin, could be offered to ratify or make sure what the typical slain lamb had foreshadowed. This work could only be achieved by a human substitute and this was provided in Jesus, God's Son, of the identical flesh and blood nature as Adam but not in bondage; therefore not Sin's flesh or Sin's possession, but, as Paul clearly emphasizes, a likeness of it. In Romans chapter 6 Paul shows a distinct difference in being Sin's servants and God's servants, the same flesh and blood but a different relationship.

I have studied a few dictionaries on the subject of "Representative" and "Substitute" and find in every case on the matter of the sacrifice of Christ the word "Representative" is used alternatively to mean "Substitute" but Christadelphians will not accept this because they stumble over the death Adam incurred. Yet I find that "Representative" will not fit Jesus as "Substitute" does in every sense in regard to His sacrifice. It is a fact of Scripture that Jesus, as the Antitypical Lamb in God's foreknowledge, died on Calvary to save Adam from a judicially inflicted death by the shedding of blood. Through that transaction of Love and Mercy, we also owe our natural existence to God and His Son, for without it Adam would have perished and we would not have existed. Therefore we have natural existence now, but if we desire life for evermore, then this comes only by enlightenment to the events in Eden and understanding of the death that came by sin as distinct from the common death of all creation as appointed of the Creator.

By this understanding, the well-worn statement by Christadelphians "If Jesus were a Substitute we ought not to die and He ought not to have risen from the dead," is blind stupidity, for there remains no logical reason for them to be baptized into His death if Baptism were not a substitute for the death Jesus experienced in the place of Adam and all in him when Adam sinned.

You have rightly demonstrated all this to Ron Coleman, and the reason God would not forgive Adam unconditionally; also the fact that our view of the substitutionary death of Jesus was not that of Christendom in general, but that Adam's redemption must be seen first as the Sin (singular), of the whole world taken away, but that those of his descendants must acknowledge through belief and faith, that their freedom from alienation and bondage must be by also dying in symbol the judicial death that legally passed upon them in Eden though not personal sinners.

This Federal principle is so unique in demonstrating the Love and Mercy of God. That is, the life of the human race lost in One Man, Adam, and gained in One Man, Jesus Christ. Thus excluding by faith the experience of Judicial Death, and open to all who hear and heed the call.

I hope I have made clear that the Adamic penalty for sin is not due to anyone until they become enlightened; that they were not personal sinners but were by God's appointment concluded under Adam's sin so that they might have the opportunity by one man's righteousness and payment of the debt of life owed to the Law in Eden, become free from the Law of Sin and Death. The Lamb of God took away the SIN of the world but He did not take away our personal sins. The former we must acknowledge by belief and symbolic death unto the constitution of sin under which we are born, and in so doing, the past is blotted out and all things become new. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature "Born Again," and as High Priest He is the propitiation for our personal sins (not unto death)."

The mind of the Creator is so marvellous and unique on this matter and is demonstrated so simply and clearly by Paul that the majority of people who claim to be Christians fail to understand and grasp His teaching. On the matter of substitution Christadelphians in general, will say anything to avoid accepting the death of Jesus as substitutionary. So how in the Apostle's words, can they reckon themselves to have died, or be dead unto sin?

Kindest Regards, Phil.

SOME MATTERS OF INTEREST FROM TWO CHRISTADELPHIANS:

Dear Brother, enclosed is a letter from America and may be of interest to yourselves and others. Also a few notes of my own which I am circulating to those likely to read them.

Nothing is of my discovering of course. I owe it to you, mainly; because the writings on the subject wouldn't have penetrated alone - due to their combative style (I blame Robert Roberts for this).

It's perhaps a pity that you allowed yourselves to get sidetracked onto interminable dispute about Romans 7 and the relationship between "flesh" and "sin." Better perhaps to have simply said "have it your own way, so long as you accept that Adam possessed it before sentence was passed." But you are of course, right about Romans 7. It's strange that we can all accept the criterion laid down (by Dr. Thomas) that sin was to be dealt with in the same nature in which it appeared.

We find that the average Christadelphian brother or sister is confused about the implication of the confessed belief that the Lord Jesus died for Himself first: and does in fact recoil from the idea. And so, for this reason I feel I have a duty towards all those whom I love, to help them as you have helped me. Quite a few are in fact, taking a fresh look.

Most sincerely yours in the Name of Christ, Brother "D."

P.S. Do what you will with the enclosed, short of direct reference to my name.

* * *

ENCLOSED NOTES FROM BROTHER "D":-

Truth or Dogma? Discussion or Repression?

No community is perfect; or its decrees infallible: and once it ceases to be self-critical; or once it regards its own writings as the criterion of Truth, then has it joined all the others who bring Christianity into discredit.

Please allow me to re-phrase some of our decrees in such a way as to make us think of their inconsistencies:

Can we honestly say to them each, “Yes, this is Truth”?

1) As we rightly teach in lectures; man was made a living soul (like the beasts), yet in fact do we believe he only became like the beasts that perish at a later stage?

2) We exhort on the theme of Adam’s lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life, which made him sin, but in fact we don’t believe he had lust of the flesh at that stage.

3) Corruptibility, lust and pride, we say only became part of him later - by sentence. Note Dr. J. Thomas and Robert Roberts differed on this, but R. Roberts’ view prevailed.

4) We die not because we are “in Adam” but because the sentence made it impossible for us not to sin. Therefore it is assumed, arbitrarily, that a sinless life would purge the sentence passed.

5) Jesus though directly Son of God, was for legal purposes counted as being Son of Adam and therefore in need of salvation. Thus normal legal procedure is reversed.

6) He was able to overcome because He only inherited 50% of our implanted sin – His mother’s. This in effect denies that He was tempted like us.

7) The state of sin inherited from His mother, although overcome, defiled Him, and necessitated His death to save Himself.

8) “For He hath made Him (to be) sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was made sin, it is thought at His birth, but at the same time we know He did not pre-exist. Thus we rob 2 Corinthians 5:21 of all meaning.

These are beliefs then which have become binding and authoritative together with some of their implications.

Have you, as required, answered “Yes”“? If so be you have, then you must, in order to be consistent, answer “No” to the following form in which the same points are presented. But we warn you that if you agree with them and answer “Yes,” I believe that they come under “Doctrines to be rejected” or at least, they contradict “Doctrines to be accepted.”

1) A more consistent statement - Man was made a living soul; with the same nature that we possess now.

2) Sin existed in Adam’s flesh before he was sentenced. It came via the serpent’s word.

3) The sentence deprived Adam of any hope of a change to incorruptibility: i.e. it let nature take its course - “dust thou art...” Note: These views, so far, are those of Brother John Thomas in 1869

4) “In Adam all die,” regardless of whether they are righteous. Only a righteous man, not in Adam, could redeem- i.e. a 2nd Adam.

5) Therefore only God’s own Son could redeem us; being a new Federal Head.

6) Jesus was exactly like us and like Adam in nature and feelings, but was not “in Adam.”

7) Because of His perfect obedience He did not come under the sentence. And not being “in Adam” He did not need to die. His death was voluntary - for us. If self-survival depended on His sacrifice, it would not be a sacrifice. Sacrifice and self-interest are mutually exclusive. The words “Greater love hath no man than this...” surely preclude self-interest.

8) Our Lord was made sin and became a curse when our iniquities were laid upon Him at the time of His sacrifice. After the pattern of animal sacrifice when a clean offering became a curse – unclean.

You will have noted that Brother Robert Roberts countermanded the mature judgment of Dr. Thomas by imposing on us his idea of implanted sin and death. And it is from this that trouble and division stemmed - because he then accused Brother Edward Turney of preaching a Jesus who did not have this implanted sin, and was therefore different from us. And so this clause of Brother Roberts has become a doctrine to be accepted. Until Dr. Thomas's death it was one to be rejected. It is sad that there was not an open exchange between the able and sincere brethren who were concerned, but instead Brother Roberts treated it as rank heresy with himself the appointed guardian of Truth, and of the brethren's consciences. So convinced was he of Christ's imminent return and of a vast falling away as its accompaniment- The result of all this is that today, an important area of understanding of God's scheme of redemption is hedged around with a wall of silence and obscured by guarded definitions outside of which all is treated as heresy.

Brother "D."

* * *

BROTHER "P" ASKS BROTHER "S" IN AMERICA THE QUESTION:

"Was the Lord Jesus considered by God to be 'in Adam' and therefore needing to save himself?"

Brother "S" replies:- Dear Brother, Now I must admit that your question is very deep and difficult, and I have pondered it much. I have written down a series of random thoughts - perhaps not in logical order but I trust they will be helpful:

- 1) Jesus had a human nature and could have sinned.
- 2) He did not sin. He had no sin of His own for which to die.
- 3) Therefore He could be God's "Lamb without blemish," the substitute for us.
- 4) Therefore God could lay our iniquities upon Him.
- 5) He "worked out" His salvation with fear and trembling by a victory over self-interest.
- 6) Therefore His death was not to save Himself nor to pay for any curse upon Himself.
- 7) The curse was upon us.
- 8) He took the curse that was upon us upon Himself.
- 9) He was descended from Adam through Mary (Luke 3:23-38).
- 10) But seminally He came from God, not Adam.
- 11) The seminal relationship, I understand, is passed down from male to male, the woman being like an incubator.
- 12) God planted the seed in Mary that formed with the egg and germ of life in her and this produced the genuinely human, or man, Jesus.
- 13) But this divine act of creation (Luke 1:35) avoided a seminal contact with Adam.
- 14) Therefore in that sense, our Lord was not "in Adam."
- 15) Our Lord was a genuine human being, genuinely tempted and there was a real possibility of sinning. Because He did not sin He could therefore take on Himself our sin,
- 16) Therefore Jesus, although descended from Adam was not seminally in Adam and therefore not under the curse.
- 17) We must remember He had to win a victory over temptation, where Adam failed. If Jesus had not won this victory He would have become second failure. Adam being the first failure. He (Jesus) had to be tested too, a test which He won, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

I appreciated your questions. It made me think, I ask the Lord for help,

Sincerely in Christ, Brother "S."

“WHAT IS GOING ON?”

Each person to whom I have shown the Editorial of the October edition of The Christadelphian Magazine 1998 has asked this question, Michael Ashton, the Editor, believes the B.A.S.F. to be equal with Scripture, if not superior to it; that it is implicitly binding on all Christadelphians and there can be no shadow of turning from it; that it is totally authoritative and not a single word of it is to be thought of as out of place.

But first we will give what we see as a fair summary of the Editorial:-

A short introduction leads us to the 3 sections in the Statement of Faith or B.A.S.F. - a) Doctrines to be received, b) Doctrines to be rejected, c) The Commandments of Christ.

The doctrines listed in (a) are considered to be all and only “first principle teachings” - the foundation of the doctrines of Christ and necessary for salvation.

The test of fellowship is the wholehearted acceptance of these “first principles” in the Scripture.

No other doctrines are to be considered as “first principles.”

There are no grounds for fellowship with anyone not agreeing that the B.A.S.F. is entirely first principle teaching.

There are no grounds for fellowship with anyone who may agree that the B.A.S.F. is first principle teachings but who may be willing to accept into fellowship someone who does not entirely agree that they are.

There are no grounds for fellowship with anyone who sees difficulty with even a single element of the B.A.S.F.

There are no grounds for fellowship within the Central Fellowship (A reference here to more than one ‘fellowship’) with anyone who considers any other teaching (e.g. divorce and remarriage) should be considered as a first principle.

Any individual or ecclesia who accepts any such doctrine as a first principle is at risk of separating themselves from the Christadelphian brotherhood at large.

The above then is our very brief summary and we can only suppose that the Editor was driven by expediency to write with such unreasonable prejudice and intolerance. He is only matched by the Pope in claiming infallibility, the Pope claiming it for himself, Michael Ashton claiming it for the B.A.S.F., while even the Watchtower Committee has changed course when it has acknowledged its mistakes.

We are indeed thankful to know of many Christadelphians who obviously think for themselves and are not prepared to follow the dictates of the Editor; we have published on pages 8-10 some correspondence between two Christadelphians which has been passed on to us with permission to publish but we mention no names. I here repeat what one of those Christadelphians writes: -

“No community is perfect; nor its decrees infallible: and once it ceases to be self-critical; or once it regards its own writings as the criterion of Truth; then it has joined all the others who bring “Christianity” into discredit.”

Michael Ashton’s Editorial is based upon the supposition that the B.A.S.F. is the “criterion of Truth.” We leave readers to draw their own conclusions from this and will now go into a little more detail on two or three matters dealt with.

Mr Ashton says “It was necessary from the earliest years... to have a summary of the teaching we accept to be at the centre and core of our hope.” However, in the earliest years Dr. Thomas only gave the briefest of guides, and this was updated as he and the community saw fit. The Statement of Faith was devised several years after his death. It was the wishes of Dr. Thomas that all who were convinced of his teachings should remain in their churches and chapels and spread the Gospel amongst their friends and associates. I believe there was a good reason for Dr. Thomas not starting a new church and it was because he expected Christ to return at any moment and it was important from that point of view that as many people as possible should be taught of His imminent coming, and this could best be achieved by believers talking with friends and neighbours with whom they mixed in their churches. It appears that the idea of forming another denomination did not seem important to Dr. Thomas and whether or not he saw the dangers in formulating a man-made creed I have no way of knowing but those dangers are so serious as to put every creed-follower under the sun outside any hope of salvation for the simple reason that once a creed or statement of beliefs is formulated it becomes more important to uphold it than the Bible. This is serious matter and ought to be given due consideration. All creeds and statements of beliefs are man-made, and while intentions may seem proper the result is inevitably a bad mistake.

Robert Roberts was responsible for the Statement of Faith because he chose and led the committee which formulated it. He also would have vetoed anything put forward which did not meet with his approval. It was an expediency of his own making in opposing Edward Turney. Indeed it was designed above all else to keep out Turneyites, for they were doing what Dr. Thomas said people should - stay in their own church and preach the truth to their friends and associates; tell them that Christ died for (anti = in the place of) us as He said and not for Himself, that there is no such thing as sin-in-the-flesh and Adam’s flesh was not changed to sinful flesh.

Like Robert Roberts, Michael Ashton advocates that any dissenting voices should be silenced and when brethren and sisters see the false teachings in the B.A.S.F. they are not listened to. Not once in the history of the Christadelphians has there been a useful exchange of reasoning. Debates arouse partisan feelings amongst them, and one sided literature has blinded thousands; but the truth has nothing to fear, and we - “are determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Michael Ashton asks, “How was it decided which doctrines be listed and what should not? What was the basis for selection?” He then claims that the Statement of Faith lists those first principles “used by the Apostle... to describe the foundation... of the doctrines of Christ” then goes on to make the claim - “As the Apostle says, they provide a firm basis on which to build and “go on unto perfection.” Wonderful words but they hardly convince thoughtful people nor instil confidence in what else he has to say.

How anyone can accept the Statement of Faith and choose to ignore its contradictions of Scripture is indeed difficult to understand. Let us here take just one point by comparing Clause 25 with the plain statement of Jesus Christ. In considering the time of Christ’s return and the first resurrection, Clause 25 states “That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and the second death, and the faithful, invested with immortality and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom...” However, Jesus said, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” Accordingly therefore, to be a Christadelphian one must believe the Statement of Faith that there will be some in the first resurrection who will die the second death – which comes after His millennial reign! So, after this life of ‘three score years and ten’ they are raised to live another thousand years of peace and then suffer the second death! In his “Studies in the Statement of Faith” Mr Ashton conveniently ignores Revelation 20:6 and avoids any reference to this contradiction.

While Mr Ashton’s claim that Clause 25 is first principle teaching of Scripture is wildly unreasonable, there are more serious matters than this in the B.A.S.F. such as Brethren “S” and “D” have discussed in their correspondence reported elsewhere in this Circular Letter, but as we have dealt with them repeatedly over the years will not go into any of them here. Suffice it to say that because some of the clauses in the Statement of Faith are badly expressed, Christadelphian writers have argued interminably about the way they should be understood. Some time ago Ron Coleman, when writing to Brother John Stevenson talked about Alice in Wonderland, and it is well known that Lewis Carroll was familiar with the effects of drug taking; one bite of a mushroom and Alice began to see things larger or smaller and more fantastic than life. It seems to me that

the B.A.S.F. is the Christadelphian's "magic mushroom" and is the cause of so many divisions, some acrimonious, yet strangely, they will not give it up.

For many of us there was a time when we thought that the Christadelphian community was different from all others in that it alone held the truth, but we found this was not the case and they are but another denomination amongst many hundreds - another daughter of Rome in as much as they have not separated themselves from the doctrine of original sin.

Our message to Michael Ashton is that of Hebrews 5:9-12 - Jesus Christ "became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec, of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God."

Brother Russell Gregory

* * *

Further Comment on the Christadelphian Editorial – “A Basis of Fellowship”

The Christadelphian Editor's first two paragraphs amount to an admission that in the 1870's the generally accepted teachings were being questioned as to their reliability and harmony with the Holy Scriptures and the Truth they contained, in contrast with what was found to be error.

The questions of reliability of the teaching accepted at the time were not of a rebellious nature but for the sake of establishing scripturally classified Truth in the light of disputations and dogmatic assumptions enforced by a dictatorial and over-zealous man.

This same man on the basis of his own clouded understanding, made false accusations and misrepresentations of what was being presented to him and others as the clear teaching of the Spirit Word of God, and thus in order to maintain allegiance to his own views and interpretations, was instrumental in compiling what is known as "The Christadelphian Statement of Faith," whereby all under that name must toe the line or be disfellowshipped.

Now if the teaching contained in the numbered clauses amount to "Truth to be received," it should be based on the Old and New Testament doctrines of Moses and the Prophets together with that of Jesus Christ and His holy apostles. There would be no necessity to assert claimed superior knowledge over others by informing them what doctrines they must reject, especially as the latter could, and may be more highly blessed in understanding of Scripture than the above Creed-binding Element. Small wonder then that "Over a comparatively short period of time" as the Editor puts it, "our Statement of Faith, as we call it, was developed."

The early Editor was faced with opposing views to his own, and though the opposing views were substantiated by Scripture and presented in a sincere and humble manner, they were met with vociferous protests, false accusations and misrepresentations in an effort to suppress the Truth being brought to the notice of people seeking it. The people I mention were not novices but intelligent readers of the Bible and members of the Christadelphian community prior to any compiled documented Statement of their Faith; they were entitled to freedom of thought and expression on the basis of what the Scriptures revealed by the Holy Spirit - not the theories of men. But what do we now see? The very thing we have been warning people about in current stages from the year 1873. Warnings which have been ignored and also suppressed but will not go away. The present Christadelphian Central Fellowship Editor has also received many warnings, but is now trying to enforce on his flock the same false doctrines compiled in Clauses of their Statement of Faith, and as he says, "The first and third sections, as we might expect, are closely referenced to the Scriptures." This is presented to his members in a non-vociferous but subtle way-

For example, those who do not discriminate and rightly divide the Word of Truth might turn to the passages of Scripture referenced and at first glance, agree with what is being contended for in certain clauses of the B.A.S.F., but in many cases it will be found that Scripture has been wrested from its context and does not prove what is being contended for.

History and Nazarene literature has shown that clause V has been and is, the greatest stumbling block ever invented as an obstacle to seeing and believing The Truth of God and salvation through Christ Jesus.

Among some of the references in Clause V are the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:9 in an attempt to confirm the false theory that the sentence Adam incurred by sin was death by a process of decay through a physical law of his being and transmittable to all his posterity. Not only is this a distortion of Paul's statement and meaning, but neither does it support the assumption that natural decay as a physical law of Adam's being was a Divine sentence passed upon him for having sinned. As a matter of scriptural fact this physical law was in Adam at his creation. Thus you destroy Clause IV's teaching completely with your Clause V, which teaches a change of the nature described in Clause IV. What an insult to the intelligence of your flock, or is it that they do not bother to read what they are expected to believe as a part of the Basis of their Faith?

I will return to the subject of these clauses after dealing with 2 Corinthians 1:9, the words of which on the surface appeared very convenient to the compilers of the Statement of Faith, but had nothing whatever to do with Adam's sentence. Paul was relating the experiences of himself and other disciples, his companions, when in Ephesus, they were faced with the prospect of being put to death in their witnessing for the Gospel. In consequence of this position and of their faith in God, Paul says, "But we had the answer of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, that raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death (past tense), and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." You will notice I quoted the alternative word to "sentence" from the marginal reference of the King James Bible which in this case can only fit Paul's experience- In the light of Romans 8:1-2, and 2 Corinthians 3:6 who could be so foolish to even think of Paul being under the sentence of death? Yet, sad to say, this is what Christadelphian Editors and leaders, together with the majority of their flock, have been teaching and believing of themselves since their Statement of Faith has been in circulation. Despite what Paul said in Romans 8:1-2 in reference to the death which came by sin (not natural death), the late Peter Watkins in reference to his false conception of natural death being the penalty for sin, declares "This sentence stands and we must die." ("The Cross of Christ" - P.Watkins). In the light of such a statement what are we to think of Paul's reference to those faithful alive and remaining unto the coming of the Lord? (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). Paul supposed that he himself could be among these elect, so Mr. Editor, where are you going to place your judgment-teaching for this class?

This is where your heading "First Principle Teaching" comes into focus. Certain things are stated in the various clauses, and references to certain passages of Scripture are made as proof but when examined they do not clarify what your teaching is supposed to do, in fact I have already shown Clauses IV and V to be destructive of the teaching of both. Well might you quote Hebrews 5:12 if these are First Principle Teachings.

We are in agreement with the teaching in Clause IV - that the first man was Adam whom God created out of the dust of the ground as a living soul, or natural body of life "very good" in kind and condition, and placed him under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience. For as God said to Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Which means that the continuance of life (natural) would be at an end through breach of law in the day of eating while in the garden.

Clause V - "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."

Was Adam immortal? It is implied here that he was, by this reference to a change of nature which Clause IV makes plain as a natural body or living soul. And did God's sentence defile Adam as stated in Clause V? Did not Adam's, own conscience defile him legally and morally through breach of Divine Law?

And was not Adam's created nature capable of being transmitted while in a sinless state in the Garden of Eden?

Did not God's Law mean that if broken, Adam's life was under sentence to be taken away at the time, seeing that his natural life (Clause IV) would terminate eventually if not changed to a superior nature like the Angels?

Here again references are made to certain passages of Scripture including Romans 5:12 and Romans 6:12 which cannot stand on their surface value but need clarification, seeing that the context is "Death by Sin" and how to remove its power through the sacrifice of Christ, and "Death by Creation" by which human beings and animal species are subject. There is a difference between these deaths because dominion of the "death by sin" is removable in this present life by our own act of faith, but the other is not, though there is no harm or condemnation of its make up. God did not condemn the flesh - His Creation, He condemned committed sin. Adam's return to the ground was the result of his Redemption provisionally, and his prevention of right to the Tree of Life to the end of his probation of 930 years, when at the resurrection he may have qualified (by faith in the Lamb of God slain in type in Eden) for life eternal.

In Clause VI there is talk of God rescuing the human race from destruction without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death. He had a plan of restoration, so it reads. I ask you, dear Editor, Was Adam in this plan of restoration? If he was not in that plan while in Eden, then he died a sinner unredeemed at 930 years of age, and if that natural death he experienced was the sentence God passed upon him, it also passed upon all men, and you are witness to the fact that the sentence of natural death has not been set aside; the late Peter Watkins wrote that it still stands. What death then has Jesus abolished to give life now and immortality through the Gospel? (2 Timothy 1:9-10). Obviously Jesus did not abolish His own death. He suffered death by the shedding of His blood willingly, not as a sentence passed upon Him through Adam's sin, but as a sacrifice to take Adam's sin away, and also of those in Adam on God's Federal Principle and Grace.

I will now go to Claus VIII which has a bearing on the above. It speaks of the promises made to Adam, Abraham and David. That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and by dying abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him.

How in the world can a man die under the condemnation of the law of sin and death's power, and be said to have abrogated it for himself or for anyone else? Did not Jesus say to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all over me were it not given thee from above, therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin"? Can't you deduct from this statement of Jesus that those responsible for handing Him over to Pilate were sinners above all men in convicting God's sinless Son's conduct, and not as you are continually teaching in this document, for His condemned nature? Nowhere in Genesis or any part of the Bible is it taught that Adam's nature was condemned on account of his sin so how can you apply it to the nature of Abraham, David and Jesus? Paul said, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise," - not condemned for wearing Abraham's nature as you teach your flock and expect them to accept it.

Clause IX explains how Jesus' appearance was by miraculous begettal of a human mother enabling Him to bear our condemnation and at the same time be a sinless bearer thereof, and therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God.

If the teaching is that Jesus was of our nature and bore our sins on His own head nailing them to the Cross as a sinless bearer uncondemned, then, put this way, I can accept it, but not that his birth of Mary was in order that He might have condemned nature and exhibit it on the Cross as an example of what God considered was just and righteous.

Jesus did in fact suffer the death required by the righteousness of God in the place of Adam, and this death was by the shedding of blood. Jesus did not die by a process of decay and then return to dust which you say was God's sentence upon Adam in accordance with the righteousness of God. So in effect you are

admitting that the death Adam incurred by the righteousness of God was inflicted death by the shedding of blood.

Clause X. My knowledge of your teaching that the death God passed upon all men was by natural decay and return to corruption and dust, prompts me to ask how you arrive at this, when in this Clause X you are stating that Jesus during His natural life was of like nature with mortal man being made of a woman, and He shared all the effects that came by Adam's transgression including the death that passed upon all men. Contradiction upon contradiction! Did Jesus die a natural death? Did His body turn to corruption and dust as Adam's and other men? Of course not. So again you must admit that if Jesus died the death which passed upon Adam and all men, Adam should have died an inflicted death by the shedding of blood. This we believe Jesus did for Adam and all in him; you do not, because your premises are false.

This Statement of the Christadelphian Faith continues with several more clauses full of contradiction and half truths beyond what one would expect from men professing spiritual intelligence. I am not a great scholar by any means but I can see a hole through a ladder and this Statement of the Christadelphian Faith is full of holes which I would like to point out to any member of that denomination if he thought I was astray on these important matters. You have plenty of members in my area that you could send along but perhaps they would not relish the thought of having to be exposed as believers in such rubbish they have perhaps innocently embraced through the misrepresentation and accusations of the past 125 years.

Jesus was not the type of Messiah the Jews after the flesh wanted, neither is He the Man preached by Christadelphians for they have and do render His Sacrifice for them void and of non effect.

I counsel you Christadelphians to beware of your Editor, but I feel there is other power and most subtle pressure at work too.

Brother Phil Parry

P.S. Clause XII. This is outrageous - to speak of God's wicked hands! The Jews and Romans instruments in the hands of God for the doing that which was impossible – the condemnation of sin-in-the-flesh through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all as a propitiation for sins and to declare the righteousness of God? Your late Editor, L.G. Sargent, denied this. Read "Christadelphian Crisis 1965."

The article below appeared in the "Good News" newspaper - Autumn 1998

A CHRISTAPELPHIAN BECOMES A PASTOR

I do not know how old my father was at the time, my guess would be about 30, when a Christadelphian challenged him to read the Bible for himself. He accepted the challenge. Both my parents had occasionally attended an Anglican church but had never received satisfactory answers to their religious questions such as, "How could Jesus be God?" "Is there really a devil?" "Do we really go to some mystical place called heaven when we die?" Christadelphians seemed to have all the answers, my parents were impressed, and subsequently joined the local Christadelphian church.

I was about three at the time, and soon started attending Sunday School, then young people's groups and by the age of 16 was preaching and leading meetings. I did not doubt that Christadelphians had found the truth as laid down in the Bible and so continued active membership for several years.

But now the situation has completely changed, and I want to tell you why. About 20 years ago we became close friends to a Christadelphian couple who had moved into the area in which we lived. We had long conversations, sometimes well into the night, about Christadelphian doctrine. These discussions opened up our minds sufficiently to begin to question some of the things we believed. We then moved to Berkshire

where a couple from a local church (not Christadelphian) came to welcome us into the area and as a result my wife began attending coffee mornings/Bible studies with them. I was impressed at her spiritual growth and decided one Sunday evening to go and check out this church. What impacted me was the Biblical preaching and sincere love the congregation had for God.

What happened next changed my life. I was persuaded to go to a large Christian conference. I was amazed to see so many Christians enjoying praising God, astounded at the wonderful stories of speakers who had seen the power of God heal people, impressed again by the Biblical bias and sincerity of the whole thing. However, these people believed that Jesus was God, a doctrine I could not accept. As it happened there was a seminar at the conference that year on the subject, "Why I believe Jesus is God." For the first time in my life I heard someone clearly explain from the Bible why they believed Jesus is God.

On my return I listened to a tape of a seminar my wife had attended on being filled with the Holy Spirit. At the end of a biblical review of the subject, the speaker encouraged those listening to ask God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, which I did, and was wonderfully filled. After this experience, I could see Bible passages about the Divinity of Jesus in a completely new light, as if scales had fallen from my eyes. I could now truly proclaim Jesus is Lord and honestly testify from my heart that I loved God as Father. They came an assurance of who I was in Christ as the Spirit testified to my spirit that I was a child of God. The fruit of the Spirit began to grow, and I knew (and so did my wife) that I was a changed person.

I treasure the new relationship I have with God through Jesus, knowing that I am saved by His grace and not by my works.

If you are a Christadelphian with a mind that is at least ajar to questioning what you believe, I would encourage you to genuinely seek God for "the truth" in the Bible. It is the Holy Spirit (not man) who will guide us into truth, for he is the Spirit of truth and it is the truth that really sets us free.

Mike Holmes is now Pastor,
Bethlehem Church, Cefn Road, Cefn Cribwr, Bridgend, CF32 OAA, South Wales.

* * *

After reading the above article Brother Phil Parry wrote to Pastor Mike Holmes on the 30th September 1998 as follows:-

Dear Friend, I read with interest your account of your experience in the Christadelphian community having been sent a copy of "Good News" by my friend in the Isle of Man. What you have stated has prompted me to ask you for explanation from the Holy Scriptures on several important subjects which affect our knowledge and understanding of God the Creator and man's relationship from the beginning before sin entered the world.

My wife and I were Christadelphians for around 18 years but due to their false teaching on several matters affecting true salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God born of Mary, and tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; we were forced to resign membership having found Truth as taught by a few people whose doctrine was being misrepresented and given a false name (from the year 1873) by a Christadelphian leader by the name of Robert Roberts.

Question: Religion must have had a beginning and a reason. You say "The truth set you free." This implies that you were a slave to something or someone. Jesus quoted those words to the Jews who marvelled that He should consider them to be in bondage. Can you explain their position and your own, and how the Truth affected your freedom and theirs?

Question: "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin and so death passed upon all men in whom all sinned." Romans 5:12. Seeing from Scripture that Adam was a creature of flesh and blood, a living soul capable of dying and of inflicted death by blood-shedding, what was the "death by sin" St. Paul describes as the penalty? In most cases the universal answer to this question is proved by Scripture to be faulty. What is your view on it?

You say that at one time you could not accept that Jesus was God, then for the first time in your life you heard someone clearly explain from the Bible why they believed Jesus is God. I don't know whether you are convinced this explanation is true but I myself cannot find any support in the Bible that Jesus was or is God, in fact the Bible clearly opposes such a doctrine in every aspect that I search,

Allow me to point out a few details, for I presume you are speaking of God as the Creator of all things and the Father of Adam at his creation from dust, and the Father of Jesus by begetting of Mary. Speaking of Jesus the Apostle to the Hebrews quotes Scripture "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7).

Question: Do you recall in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus praying to God His Father? He prayed in agony, "Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt."? Was Jesus God praying to Himself? When the Martyr Stephen was being stoned to death he said he saw heaven opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Please note He was full of the Holy Spirit when he said this, would you say then that Stephen lied? (Acts 7:56).

Jesus quoted David saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand till I make they foes they footstool." Here again are two persons not one. Israel's first and great commandment was and is, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One." Does not the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians chapter 4 harmonize with this great and first commandment?

There are two distinct personages mentioned by Paul, the one is Jesus the one Lord and head of the man, and the other the One God and Father of all His adopted sons and daughters through faith and baptism into His Son's sacrificial death. "I will have you know said" Paul of the true believers in Christ, "that the head of the woman is the man and the head of the man is Christ, and the Head of Christ is God." How then can anyone explain from Scripture that Jesus is God the Father? "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews 13:7,8).

There is no evidence in the Bible of Jesus being equal in supreme power with His Father though it is true that they were both one in attributes and purpose. Did not the Apostle Peter declare that Jesus is the one mediator between God and man, and that He is also High Priest making intercession to the Father for His own household? How then can He be God and a High Priest and Mediator?

Question: What of the Scripture that declares of Jesus "My flesh shall rest in hope neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"? Who raised Jesus from the dead? He was certainly dead, - to believe otherwise is to deny that He sacrificed His life for the many" (Matthew 20:28). If Jesus was God, then God was flesh and blood and died on the Tree of Calvary. This theory makes utter nonsense of the Atonement.

There are scores of references in Scripture against, the theory that Jesus was, or is God. Such false theories border on Trinitarianism the doctrine of a triune God which Trinitarians cannot explain, therefore they know not God and exclude themselves from Life Eternal, for as Jesus said of His Father, "This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Jesus separates the two thus, "The only true God" and "Jesus Messiah" whom the Only True God had sent

I am a firm believer in the power of the Holy Spirit in the impartation of its gifts from its one source God the Creator and the Father of Jesus. All through the epistles of the New Testament you may note this difference between God and His Son expressed. The miracles, signs and wonders were what God did by the Man approved of Him, Jesus Christ.

Christadelphians were astray from the first few chapters of Genesis and had accepted the doctrine of original sin introduced through Apostate Rome. Their Statement of Faith document is based on this false theory, but nevertheless, they are right on the fact that Jesus is not God and on some other subjects except on the Sacrifice of Jesus which on their terms and teaching amounts to ignorance and blasphemy, this was one of the reasons myself and my wife left that community and found that we believed the same doctrine as taught by the first century Apostles.

This doctrine we found out was being taught and preached with word of mouth and the spreading of literature and being, persistently opposed by Christadelphians from the year 1873 because their false basis blinded them from a correct understanding of what was contained in that literature. This position still prevails today but many have left the Christadelphians for this reason and because the power of God has drawn them to the true Messiah of Israel and the true reason for His birth and death. My wife and I resigned from the Christadelphian community in 1952 with no regrets.

You do not say much of what you actually believe, but a true person “in Christ” is obligated to know God and His Purpose centred in His Son which gives a lively Hope for the future. In other words as Paul exhorted the servants of God, “Be ready always to give to every man that asketh you the reason of the Hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

I am ready while my health prevails (being over 80 years of age), to give to everyone a reason of the Hope within me, but since I have made certain statements and requested a few answers from you, I will eagerly await your reply and comments after which I can compare and assess the position as based on the teaching of Jesus, the Apostles, and Prophets.

It appears strange that when my friend in the Isle of Man speaks and relates these same views to the Evangelical section there, that he is unwelcome and considered by them as an agent of the Devil. No marvel, for that this is what they thought of Jesus in His day.

I hope you will accept this letter as from one who appreciated how the Truth made free and showed more of the Grace and Love of God than the severity, though the latter must not be ignored.

My wife and I remain Yours in Sincerity, Phil and Rene Parry.

Brother and Sister Parry received the following reply dated 7th October 1998:-

Dear Phil and Rene, Thank you for your recent letter. It is interesting that the paper in which my article was published should have reached so far afield as the Isle of Man and Gloucester, I also had a letter from somebody in North Devon. I have spent a number of hours formulating a reply to your questions and trust that you will give due consideration to the Bible passages I have used.

I “The truth set me free.” Jesus used these words, the truth will set you free, meaning freedom from the law and sin - being brought into grace and righteousness.

My words were largely a play on the Christadelphian’s use of the word “Truth.” They talk of “The Truth” and Christadelphian doctrine synonymously. They may say “he is in the truth” meaning that he is a Christadelphian.

The Jews believed their righteousness came from observing the Law - but no matter how hard they tried they found they were unable to keep it, unable to cease from sinning, they were slaves to sin (John 8:34, Romans 6:16). This was also my position as a Christadelphian. I was trying to do the right thing according to the Word of God, but failing miserably. I led a double life. I could preach on a Sunday at a church, but would be living a worldly life the rest of the week. The believing Jews came to realize that Jesus was the fulfilment of the law (Matthew 5:17). The law was but a shadow of things to come in Jesus, The rituals and symbology found their fulfilment in Him. The new covenant was sealed by the blood of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles saw the emergence of a people living under God’s grace with the law now written on their hearts as prophesied so many years before by prophets such as Ezekiel. All striving to live out the law was gone. As Paul puts it – we are now slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18). When the Spirit of God enabled me to be born again into God’s family, I knew I was free from my slavery to sin and constant guilt and condemnation due to my inability to keep the law. Now I knew I was forgiven, a child of God by His grace, and Romans 8 now came alive for me. The sense of freedom, relief and joy, was, and still is, a wonderful gift.

2. “Death by sin.” Before “the fall” man was by definition sinless. When they sinned so death came upon them. Not immediately but inevitably. The process of death began in them and in creation. When Paul refers to this in Romans 5, he is comparing this with eternal life that came through Jesus Christ. This eternal life is something that will be totally fulfilled at a future time, but, is also experienced to a lesser degree when we are “born again” (see Romans 5:17).

The “death by sin” clearly has a physical aspect to it, but in the context, there is also a spiritual aspect implied. As Paul develops the argument into Romans 6, he refers to being raised with Christ through baptism to newness of life. The whole chapter is referring to life now rather than in eternity. The fullness of life or abundant life that Jesus talked about we can begin to enjoy now through our relationship with the Father. Therefore, as soon as we sin we become spiritually dead by that sin, cutting ourselves from a Holy God unable to relate with us because of that sin; when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we are raised from this death to newness of life where our sin is now completely covered by the blood of Christ and we are clothed with His righteousness (He fulfilled the requirements of the law as our sinless sacrifice).

3. Concerning the Divinity of Christ. This is clearly a big subject, and I have not the time to do it justice. My own experience of the Holy Spirit’s work in my life left me in no doubt as to Christ’s divinity. It was like scales falling from my eyes enabling me to see Trinitarian doctrine in Scripture. I was like yourself before this experience, puzzled at how anyone could hold such views in the light of the passages you quote. It did not seem to make sense. However, we must remember that we are talking about the God of the Universe whose complexity is beyond any human thought. To rely on our own human logic in this matter would be naive. Let me point you to a few passages that reflect a Trinitarian view, but I have to say that it will need the Holy Spirit to convince you!

The Trinity can be summarized as follows: The one true God, as already established (Isaiah 43:10, Deuteronomy 6:4) is made up of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each member of the godhead is called “God” in the Bible. The Father bears the name God (Galatians 1:1, Titus 1:4, etc.). The Son, or Word (logos) is repeatedly called God in verses like John 1:1,14, Acts 20:28, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8 etc. The Holy Spirit is identified as God in various Scriptures (Acts 5:3-4, 1 John 4:2-3, Hebrews 10:15-16) The concept of the unity within the Trinity is seen in a verse such as Matthew 28:19 where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, comprise one “name” (singular in Greek).

Please take a look at these verses: Matthew 3:16,17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 1:35; 3:21,22; John 3:34-35; 14:26; 16:13-15; Acts 2:32,33; 38:39; Romans 15:16,30; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6; 13:14; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:18-22; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14; 1 Timothy 3:15,16; Hebrews 9:14; 10:7,15; 1 Peter 1:2, to name a few.

Consider too how Jesus took to himself the Old Testament names and titles for God.

1. Yahweh. See Exodus 3:13-15. I AM (ego eimi), now see John 8:57-59 I AM (ego eimi) also used in John 8:24 (where “He” or “the one I claim to be” is not in the original Greek) - this also applies to John 8:28. See Isaiah 40:3. Lord is Yahweh - fulfilled in Mark 1:2-4; cf John 1:23. Joel 2:32 - Lord = Yahweh - see Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21,38. See John 10:30-33, where Jesus’ enemies knew full well what he was claiming by what he was saying.

2. God - (Theos, Elohim). See Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1 - In Greek grammar there is no doubt that Jesus Christ must refer to both God and Saviour - only one person is meant, not two. The same applies to Titus 2:13. In John 20:28 - Thomas uses the title of Theos without any rebuke from Jesus. Compare Acts 2:36 with 2:39. See Acts 16:31,34. See Revelation 7:10-12,17. Who is in the centre of the throne? Compare Acts 18:25 “way of the Lord” (concerning Jesus) and Acts 18:26 “way of God.” Isaiah 7:34 - God with us, Isaiah 9:16 - Mighty God - (El Gibbor) same phrase used of Yahweh in Isaiah 10:21. John 1:1,14 “Word” refers to Jesus - The Word of God. The grammatical force of this passage is “and the Word was Himself God,”

3. Alpha and Omega - expressing the eternal nature of God. Both Jesus and God are called this. See Isaiah 41:4; Revelation 1:8; 21:6,7. Compare with Revelation 1:17,18; 2:8; 2:12-16.

4. Lord: Kurios (Greek) - used for God by the Jews. Adonai (Hebrew). Kurios is used as a term of respect and in a sacred sense (i.e. meaning God). Several clear examples of Jesus being called Kurios in the sacred sense: 1 Corinthians 12:3. Notice also in this passage Trinitarian thought, verse 4 - same spirit, verse 5 - same Lord (i.e. Jesus, v 1) verse 6 - same God, Also verses 11 and 18. The Spirit and God are treated as synonymous. Note how various people pray to Jesus as Lord. Acts 7:59,60; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 12:8-9; 1 John 5:13-15. He and Him refer to Jesus (verse 13). Acts 8:24 (see verse 10). Compare 1 Corinthians 2:8 with Psalm 24:10- Isaiah 45:22-24 with Philippians 2:10,11. Exodus 31:13,17 with Matthew 12:8.

5. Saviour - See Isaiah 43:11 and Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 4:10 and John 4:42.

6. King - Expressing the majesty of God. See Revelation 17:14; 19:16 and 1 Timothy 6:14-16 (this may be referring to Christ or God - if God then Jesus shares the title King of Kings with God; if Jesus, then he would be only Sovereign, King of Kings, Lord of Lords etc. Either way, it argues for Christ's divinity). We could look up similar passages helping us to see that Jesus and God share many other titles such as: Judge, Light, Rock, Shepherd, Creator (e.g.- John 1:2,3,10; Colossians 1:16-18; Hebrews 1:1,2,10), Giver of life (e.g. John 10:28-30), Forgiver of sins (e.g. Colossians 2:13; 3:13) (In Mark 2:7, this was treated as blasphemy by the Jews, for only God can forgive sins!), Healer.

Jesus also possesses the attributes of God:

Omnipresence - e.g. Ephesians 4:10; Matthew 18:20; Ephesians 3:17.

Omniscience - e.g. John 16:30; Colossians 2:3.

Omnipotence - e.g. Luke 8:25; Matthew 28:28.

Pre-existence - e.g. John 16:28; John 3:13; John 17:5; John 1:15,30.

Eternalness - e.g. Micah 5:2, Isaiah 9:6; John 8:58.

Immutability - e.g. Hebrews 13:8.

Jesus also possesses the authority of God. He received worship (e.g. Matthew 28:9; John 9:38; Hebrews 1:6; Philippians 2:10-11). He also had authority to resurrect himself (John 2:19). To speak as God (e.g. Matthew 23:34-37).

The Bible teaches that God became man in Jesus Christ: See Colossians 1:15; 2:9; Philippians 2:5-8; John 12:45; 14:5-9; Hebrews 1:3.

You say, Phil, that you have found truth as taught by a few people. I would humbly suggest that to ignore the early Christian church fathers such as Polycarp (A.D. 69- 155, Bishop of Smyrna and disciple of John), Ignatius (died A.D.110, head of church at Antioch, Iranaeus (c. A.D. 125-200), Justin Martyr (A.D.110-116) and many others who clearly referred to the divinity of Christ, along with the great theologians of Church history who formed the Christian creeds still used today and the vast majority of Christians who have a living faith in God through Christ is at best worthy of question.

The nature of most of your objections to Jesus being God shows me that you have no grasp of how those who believe in the Trinity understand it. I hope the above has gone some way in doing that - helping you see that although the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have varying functions they are still one and are all called God.

Let me briefly address some of your specific objections that perhaps are not covered above;

1. How could Jesus pray to the Father if he was God? Remember the functions of the three 'persons' (person is really an inadequate word to describe God, but it is the best we can do) of the godhead are different. Jesus was sent from the Father and took on human form. He came to reconcile us back to God by dying for our sins. When here he said and did nothing that the Father did not tell him. He was constantly praying. He came to experience what it was like to be human. By being on earth, it didn't mean that heaven was empty - the Father was in heaven. We have to try and think beyond human forms and realize that God is spirit (John 4:24).

2. When Stephen saw heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God - we need to understand what this would mean to Stephen. The term Son of Man was used many times in the New Testament. One of its meanings is to depict the human aspect of Christ, his death and suffering (Mark 8.3-1) and his return to glory (Mark 14:62). How comforting for Stephen to see this vision of Jesus, the one who had gone through a worse death than he was experiencing, but who would receive Stephen with open arms in glory.

We can only see God as much as he wishes to reveal himself. No human being can see the full extent of God and history and live.

3. 1 Corinthians 11:3. This passage is about authority not superiority. A man is not superior to a woman, but there is a pattern of authority. While on earth, in order to identify with human beings, Jesus voluntarily put himself under the Father's headship.

4. Who raised Jesus from the dead? The glorious Father (e.g. Ephesians 1:17,20).

Towards the end of your letter you say that those who believe in the Trinity cannot explain it and therefore do not know God or Jesus whom he sent.

The knowledge Jesus is praying about in John 17:3 is not just intellectual, but also relational. Eternal life is not wrapped so much in what you know but who you know. We will never be able to fathom the unfathomable - for that is what God is. To pretend to completely understand God is a fallacy.

I have come to a personal relationship with my Father in heaven through the Lord Jesus Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit. I love God and desire to worship and serve him for the rest of my earthly days and to continue into eternity.

I am assured of eternal life because of the sacrificial death of my Saviour who has covered all my sin with his blood and clothed me with his righteousness, I am saved by grace, not by works.

I have no more time to continue. I pray that this will be helpful to you and others. I have used as a source for this letter a book entitled "Jesus – A Biblical Defence of his Deity" by Josh McDowell and Bart Larson. Crossway Books. If you would like a fuller explanation of the passages used, I recommend you obtain a copy.

Your new friend, Mike Holmes.

* * *

Upon receiving the above letter from Pastor Mike Holmes, Brother Phil Parry asked me if I would like to answer first, so on 1st November I wrote;-

Dear Mike Holmes, I do hope you will not mind that Mr and Mrs Parry let me see your letter of October 7th but they knew I would be interested in it.

I too was a Christadelphian though never accepting some portions of their Statement of Faith. In my late twenties, wanting to know more about other denominations, I attended lectures at the Birmingham Bible Institute. This is an interdenominational college where students train to become ministers for their particular church. I found I was the only student who did not take for granted the doctrine of the Trinity so consequently I approached a minister/lecturer whom I felt most at ease with and asked him if he would be prepared to go through Scripture and prove to me that the doctrine of the Trinity is indeed taught there. He asked for three weeks to prepare his notes and then one evening I spent many hours at his home listening attentively to all he had to say and making notes and Bible references.

I found this minister to be most convincing; he knew the Bible much better than I, and I realized that no lecture I had ever heard from a Christadelphian platform had in any way matched the arguments put to me that evening.

Now I wanted desperately to know the Truth of the matter for I felt that I must have been like the woman at the well of Samaria to whom Jesus said “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship...” I spent the next few weeks in mental turmoil determined to find from the Bible pointers to either view. Prayerfully and carefully I searched, for if indeed God the Father, God the Holy Ghost and God the Son were so then that is what I must accept, believe, worship and teach. It would mean a big change in my life and a wrench from my family, but I was prepared for that if it was necessary.

One night while in prayer and contemplation, mulling over so many Bible texts I suddenly saw the impossibility of the Trinity in such a clear light that I wondered why ever it had taken me so long to see how it contradicted and made impossible the saving grace through Jesus Christ!

It was a great step forward for me and I well remember the feeling of joy at seeing the Gospel message so clearly - more clearly than ever before.

I remained with the Christadelphians for many more years taking part in services, especially the Sunday School. At that time, so far as I was aware, most of the ecclesia were of like mind in respect of our dislike of the doctrine of sin-in-the-flesh and it was rarely mentioned, but eventually and I suppose inevitably, newcomers with narrow views on sin in the flesh joined the ecclesia and I was asked to leave as a heretic.

I had heard of the Nazarene Fellowship but knew only one, Ernest Brady, and went to see him at this time. His views were the ones I had held all these years though perhaps imperfectly in not appreciating the extent and implications of such beliefs. Consequently I was accepted into their midst and it has ever since been a joy to share the fellowship of those of like precious faith.

All this leads me to ask you to reconsider your own position with regard to your views. The Bible references you put forward for consideration are for the most part the usual standard references one would expect. But I wonder if you know that theologians while still seemingly accepting the doctrine of the Trinity realize that it is doubtful whether the Bible does indeed teach it. Indeed we have had recent correspondence in which it was quoted that “The majority of New Testament scholars in this century have doubted that the claim that Jesus was God is to be found in the New Testament.” (This, I understand was reported in “The Spectator” for March 7th 1987). Also we have been told that there are two chapters in “The Present-day Christological debate,” headed respectively, “Chalcedon abandoned; Roman Catholic theologians” and “Chalcedon abandoned; Protestant theologians.”

With such uncertainty amongst theologians, how is it that anyone can believe in the Trinity as a proven doctrine, and if it is not a proven doctrine, ought anyone to believe and teach it as if it were? Is it not then a case of “Ye worship ye know not what”?

In section 3 of your letter, under the heading “Concerning the Divinity of Christ,” you make the claim that “To rely on our own human logic in this matter would be naive.” This is unsustainable because it is our Creator who has given us this ability to use logic, and if what you say were correct then it makes nonsense of Isaiah 1:18 – “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord...” Most certainly the way of salvation is hidden from most people but Jesus Christ has given us the promise that “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine...” (John 7:17). The doctrine that Jesus Christ was concerned with can be divided broadly into two parts - firstly, how our sins are taken away and secondly, the life we should lead as a result.

How sin is taken away is briefly summed up by one of our writers thus:-

“God has graciously provided for us this right relation before Him, on His own glorious principle of substitution. Jesus, the innocent, endured the literal execution due to Adam’s sin, and for our recognition of this fact, God has prohibited any from entering the law of the spirit of life in Christ, until they undergo the execution due to the law of sin and death; but thank God, only in symbol (Romans 6). It is then, as Dr Thomas says, “A gracious, merciful and loving Father who first purchased us from the law of sin and death, at the expense of His beloved Son, and put us on probation for immortality.” “

It will be seen that the fact that Jesus Christ died as our Substitute is incompatible with the teaching that Jesus Christ is God the Son, but perfectly compatible with the long suffering, mercy and love of our Heavenly Father, who has accepted His children into a covenant relationship for a period of probation leading them to eternal life.

There is much more I would like to write, for example, Jesus said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Obviously then, we can do all He commands and keep the law perfectly. To say we are unable to keep the law is in my opinion, false humility. So then, from what are we freed? However, I understand Phil Parry has sent you his booklet "Behold The Man - Behold What Manner of Love," and mine, "Why Jesus Christ Chose To Die," so I will not now burden you with any more.

I was pleased for the opportunity of reading your letter and hope and pray you will not consider my reply intrusive.

Yours in Sincerity in seeking truth, Russell Gregory.

Brother Phil Parry also replied to Pastor Mike Holmes and on the 4th November wrote: -

Dear Mr Holmes, Greetings in the Name of Messiah, the Son of God.

1. "The Truth Set Me Free." I agree with you that Jesus used those words, but not in the way you think He meant them, for the fact remains there were people who were able to keep the Law which you say they were unable to do. The Apostle Paul declares, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandments holy, and just and good" (Romans 7:12). Many are confused by this chapter 7 because they have been taught the error that the law of sin and death refers to a process of physical decay and death introduced into the flesh of Adam and Eve when they sinned, whereas it was a legal sentence from which it became possible to be made free through faith, by those who saw it in the typical sacrifices pointing to the blood-covering, retrospectively in Eden and prospectively in the Antitypical Lamb of God. Nevertheless, the rigid keeping of the law was only temporal for natural life, not eternal life, for Paul states, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). This is of course referring to the sacrifice of Christ in taking away the sin of the world under which dominion all were held in bondage. Read Romans chapter 6 and then go to Romans 8:1-4 where Paul shows that they who have been made free from the law of sin and death can fulfil the righteousness of the law, having died unto the dominion of sin and the death by sin through baptism into the death of Christ Jesus, thereby walking in newness of life in the Spirit, but still in bodies of flesh and blood.

They are now doing what Paul says the law could not do through its weakness, and not through the inability of human flesh to keep it, being under legal and Federal sentence of sin and death in Adam no more, Jesus having paid with His life the debt Adam owed to the law and could not pay without perishing as a sinner. I appreciate what you say about your personal sin at times, but you should not confuse personal sin and the fact of being constituted a sinner by the imputation of Divine Law on the Federal principle (Romans 5:19). You say, "The truth set me free" and you give your understanding of what Jesus meant to convey to the Jews, but your words you say were largely a play on the Christadelphian's use of the word "Truth." They talk of "The Truth" and Christadelphian doctrine synonymously. They may say "he is in the truth" meaning that "he is a Christadelphian."

Your observation on this point is indeed correct for there is abundant proof that Truth has not made them free, for they believe that the law of sin and death is a physical implantation in their bodies even after being immersed in baptismal cleansing as they term it. Even Dr. Thomas wrote of the Law of sin and death, that it was a physical death by a process of decay as a result of Adam's sin. Paul's revelation of Adam's sin does not teach this.

In connection with these facts and at this juncture I would like to enclose a few comments I wrote some time ago on Paul's Epistle to the Romans which may clear up some of the confusion people have been presented with:-

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A TREATISE BY PAUL THE APOSTLE ON LAW AND MAN'S RELATION TO GOD THROUGH ITS OPERATION.

A LEGAL NOT A PHYSICAL APPLICATION.

God's creation - First that which is natural - by food and the breath of life - vegetation - animal - and man. See Ecclesiastes 3:20.

Law given to man an intelligent being of understanding. No law given to beasts – yet physically man has no pre-eminence.

Romans 5:12, “Wherefore as by one man sin entered the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men (not on beasts) in whom (as constituents of Adam's body of life) all sinned.”

Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

Yes, they not having been born would have perished in the judicial deaths of Adam and Eve, but verse 24, “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” they owe their existence to the fact of Adam's redemption, being non-existent as persons, yet part of Adam's body, they were powerless to exhibit faith in what God did for Adam through His Son Jesus. But after being born and growing to a responsible age they must recognize their justification from sin and death through the typical and provisional means appointed of God - the shedding of blood of the animal as pointing to Jesus, the substance and seed of the woman prophesied and promised.

I would not say that any law was in operation on a similitude of that given to Adam, or of that given to Moses for Israel, but I believe a voluntary conduct of faith continued from Adam and through his posterity, and that Abel was an example of this in the bringing of his sacrificial offering to the Lord in recognition of owing his birth and life to God's second Son by begetting, who would in due time take away the Sin of the world and the death-by-sin which Adam introduced, the death, judicial, that passed upon all men – not personally, but Federally.

Looking at it from this point of view I can understand Paul's statement “For until the law (of Moses) sin was in the world but” could not be imputed personally when no direct law was imposed as was the case with Adam and Moses, there being only a voluntary code of conduct by faith and not by works of law. It applied to those who acknowledged that they had been made righteous after having been constituted sinners by one man's disobedience. (Romans 5:17-19).

1. Adam to Moses - The dispensation of sin - Death by sin reigning - a legal position.

Accepting these facts and that the sacrifices were but provisional types of the one who was to abolish judicial death hanging as a sentence un-taken away by the Lamb of God not yet on the scene, Paul declares, “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

This means that Jesus was the opposite (“Anti” - against) of Adam. Adam the Federal head of the natural, a type inferior to the Anti-type Jesus, the Federal Head of the Spiritual, and as we have borne the image of the earthy we may also bear the image of the Heavenly, but first that which is natural, and afterward that which is Spiritual.

My contention is that if Paul was referring to natural death reigning he would not have restricted the period of time as from Adam to Moses. Would he not have said that “death reigned from Adam to the time of my writing to you Romans” if he had meant the common death experienced by man and beasts?

Consider Ecclesiastes 3:20, “All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.” Is not this a creation related to God’s appointed physical law whereby death is an accepted natural experience? And is it not supported in Hebrews 9:27 as, in many cases, a merciful appointment of God that in no way prevents our attainment to eternal life in His Kingdom and Glory through Jesus Christ our Lord who abolished for us the death by sin?

Concluding words of Paul to the Romans, and all believers as ourselves, Romans 16:25-27:- “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ? according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

Reverting now to your letter; you speak in a personal sense, “My sin and my inability to keep the law.” Let me remind you that as a Gentile you were not born under the Law of Moses, nevertheless you were born under the dominion of Sin on the Federal principle, but not responsible in the personal sense until enlightened to your position of alienation from God by Adam’s sin. This will have been made clear in my enclosed comments on Paul’s letter to the Romans.

2. Death By Sin

We do not experience natural decay and death by Adam’s sin, but as a result of being born with the same corruptible nature in which Adam was created and placed in the Garden of Eden sinless until he disobeyed God’s conditions for his continuance of natural life whereby sentence of inflicted death would pass upon him the moment he disobeyed. This could not take place if he was anything but of corruptible nature capable of death at Creation.

You are therefore incorrect when you say “The process of death began in Adam and Eve and creation when they both sinned,” How therefore could a lamb be a sacrifice for Adam’s sin if it was also under sentence of death for the sin of Adam?

3. Concerning The Divinity of Christ.

You state “This is clearly a big subject, and have not the time to do it justice... My own experience of the Holy Spirit’s work in my life left me in no doubt as to Christ’s divinity.” I am not clear on what you mean by Christ’s divinity. If you mean He was of a different nature from all other human beings then He could not have been a man tempted in all points like as men are, which incidentally, is the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the Apostle Paul. Adam was also a human being of corruptible nature and experienced temptation. He was also a Son of God by creation but failed to retain his relationship in the full sense in that he transgressed the Divine condition for continuance of natural life and (by God’s race and approval), life eternal. Hence the need for his redemption and a new probation as an adopted son through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the begotten Son of Mary of the seed of David according to the flesh.

Here we have before us two Sons of God, Adam and Jesus. What then was the difference between them in regard to their nature? None. What then became different to cause the necessity of Jesus the second Son of God? The answer is clear - Jesus must be of the same nature of Adam, and under trial prove it was possible to be obedient to God and so justify God in condemning sin seeing that God does not formulate laws which man is unable to keep, - and after this completion of sinless conduct, willingly lay down His life in the blood to redeem Adam and all in his loins who by enlightenment recognize their position under the law of sin and death and accept Jesus as God’s Ransom price. This is the difference between Adam the sinner and Jesus the sinless, needing no redemption. As Paul says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

Jesus points to this during His ministry and shows God’s part in it first of all and then His own part and authority later, thus a distinction of persons yet of one mind and purpose. You say in your letter, “We are talking about the God of the universe whose complexity is beyond any human thought.” What a statement in view of what Jesus said in John 6:44-46! “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me

draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets. And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.”

Jesus explains in verse 44 that at that time His Father was drawing men unto Him and this was through being taught of God, this being through God’s Word and teaching by His Son, as Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you they are Spirit and they are life.” But please note this Spirit Word was manifest in flesh and drew men to the reason for Jesus being raised up of God. God was drawing people to Christ until His lifting up on Calvary after which the position changed. As Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me.” But mark this, Paul says that no one needs to bring Christ down from Heaven or to bring Him up again from the dead, for the word is nigh thee even the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart men believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

How can you reconcile Paul’s statement with your own in saying that Jesus raised Himself from the dead? You refute Paul’s statement and that of Peter - Acts 2:32, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses.” Please note, God did not send His Son as a person from Heaven or as a part of a Trinity already existent. The words of Peter are plain enough as follows from Acts 3:26, “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Mark this, Jesus was not sent down but raised up. “For Moses truly said unto the Fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22). Please note Acts 3:19 to 21, it is God who decides when to send Jesus His Son to the earth to complete all things which He hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

I would ask you to consider again your statement that “Jesus raised himself from the dead.” Can a lifeless body of flesh raise itself to life? Are you not saying in effect that Jesus was not dead? Did He not say Himself, “I am he that liveth and was dead” (Revelation 1:18)? Or are you asking me to believe the reference “I am” in His words, to convey the theory that Jesus was the “I AM” who spoke with Moses at the burning bush? Ecclesiastes chapter 9 declares that the wicked and the righteous dead know not anything.

The Psalmist declares “The dead cannot praise thee.” “In death there is no remembrance of Thee, in the grave who shall give Thee thanks? The living he shall praise Thee as I do this day.”

In quoting John 10:17,18 to support your theory that Jesus raised Himself from the dead, you are misinterpreting what Jesus meant by power to lay it down and power to take it again. The fact is that God allowed His Son to die for the world under no compulsion and with the assurance and the authority that He would raise Him from the dead on account that His Son was not worthy of death; this was the power Jesus spoke of, and in reply to Pilate who thought of himself as having power over Jesus to crucify Him or to release Him, Jesus replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above...” You see from this that Jesus was not crediting the “power from above” to Himself, He was delivered up by the Father that all things might be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Him (Luke 24:38-53). The Apostle Peter confirms this in Acts 2:22 when he was preaching to the Jews about their Messiah, that He was a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up having loosed the bonds of death, because it was not possible or right that He should be held by them. Yes, God, not Jesus, loosed the bonds that could hold the sinner in the grave but not the sinless one.

Roman Catholicism, Trinitarianism, Gnosticism are theories of men void of the Holy Spirit which entered into the true church of Christ as St. Paul said would happen after his decease. As a result confusion reigned plus torture and death to those who defended the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles. The Apostle John condemned those who could not accept Jesus was a physical man of flesh but must be of a higher supernatural nature, thus denying the difference between the Father and Son as John puts it in his Epistles. Therefore the important thing is to know the Son, and through Him to know the Father. See Luke 10:21-24.

These babes knew the Father and the Son as two distinct beings by the revelation of Jesus. Roman Catholics pronounce the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God which would imply she existed from Eternity and even before the Supreme Creator of all things. It sounds illogical and in fact it is, but worse still they make her the mediator between God and man in the place of Jesus whom Peter said was the One Mediator, neither is there salvation in any other and none other Name under heaven whereby we must be saved- The Father of Jesus did not die on the Cross of Calvary yet I was told by an Anglican Church minister that God came down from Heaven and inhabited the womb of Mary for a period of nine months and after being born, lived the usual life of a Jew learning obedience by the things which He suffered and then died on the Cross for mankind. Obedience? What to?

Paul says, "Know ye not that as many of you which have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Is this not proof that Jesus died and that God did not, and could not?

So you can see, Mr Holmes, that one error begets more error until it becomes confusion worse confounded, and our hearts desire and prayer to Yahweh is that you will realize the position into which you have been led by theories and doctrines of men void of the Holy Spirit which is the power of God's Word unto salvation.

You may prefer to continue in your present position which we would consider your loss, not ours, in that we have tried to enlighten you which is our duty, and not to offend or score points. Therefore we hope we have not overwhelmed you with too much reading.

We therefore remain, Yours Sincerely in The Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Phil and Rene Parry.