

Nazarene Fellowship Circular letter No 180

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends.

Loving Greetings. Just before Christmas 1998 I read in a magazine an interesting piece on the Star of Bethlehem. It contained some fascinating facts and a certain amount of speculation about the star and the possible true date of the birth of Jesus Christ. I have edited the article and what follows is the gist of it which I think provides some food for thought.

Love to all from Helen Brady.

"It is almost certain that Jesus Christ was not born on what we now recognize as Christmas Day, 1,999 years ago. From the accounts of Luke and Matthew and historical research, it seems most likely that His true birth date lies somewhere between 8 BC – the date of the census of Caesar Augustus which Luke states was the reason for Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem - and 4BC the year in which Herod is believed to have died. Our - wholly erroneous - dating of the event comes from the Roman monk, Dionysius Exiguus, who in AD 525 fixed the origin year in our present calendar by calculating the reigns of Roman emperors. The celebration of Christ's birthday, December 25th had been decided on some 200 years earlier, although it is likely that in choosing the date the Christians simply appropriated the Roman festivals of Saturnalia the Unconquered Sun, on December 21st and 25th which were characterized by feasting and the exchange of gifts.

The birth of Christ is described in only two of the four gospels, Luke and Matthew. Matthew's account, which some Biblical scholars believe was written some 80 years after the event, is the only one to mention the star. Matthew describes how 'having seen the star in the east' the wise men journey to Jerusalem and Herod instructs them to go to Bethlehem in search of the child. He continues 'When they had heard the king they departed: and lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they came into the house they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.' From this simple yet enigmatic account has grown almost 2,000 years of speculation and research into the exact nature of the star.

One might have thought that science or theology would, by now, have come up with an answer. But incredibly the debate goes on. So what kind of star could it have been that was so striking to the Magi? Neither novas - new stars - zodiacal light nor ball lightning quite meet the requirements of Matthew's description.

The most popular, and certainly the most intriguing theory about the star is that it was not a single star at all. For this idea we must go back to Johannes Kepler, the 17th century astronomer who formulated basic planetary laws and founded modern optics. In 1603, Kepler observed a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces from his observatory in Prague. A conjunction is when two planets come into close alignment appearing almost to touch in the sky. Conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn occur approximately every 20 years. But Kepler was also something of a mystic. As such, it is possible that he was aware of an ancient astrological tradition which held not only that a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces foretold important events, but also that it had a particular significance for Israel.

Kepler discovered that 7BC had seen an extremely rare astronomical occurrence: a triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces, a conjunction that occurs three times in the same year. Such triple conjunctions occur at approximately 139 year intervals. But a triple conjunction in Pisces occurs only once every 900 years or so (the last was in 1822). From this Kepler calculated that Christ had been conceived in 7BC and born in 6BC.

Incredibly Kepler's theory remains the key building block in constructing a picture of Christ's birth. The night sky of 7BC described by Kepler is recreated by planetariums around the world for Christmas displays. And his theory forms the backbone for the modern research of David Hughes and Percy Seymour, leading both to the conclusion that Christ was born on September 15, 7BC, as we shall see.

To understand why Kepler's triple conjunction was important, we must try to understand who the wise men of Matthew's account were and why they followed the star. We owe the term 'wise men' to the King James Bible, although the word 'magi' is more accurate, deriving from the Greek *magoi*. Magi means magicians, but for the purposes of the story of Christ's birth the translation in the New English Bible 'astrologers' is more felicitous. The Greek historian Herodotus made note of the Magi as a priestly group who existed in the sixth century BC in Babylon, performing religious ceremonies and divinations. Following the conquest of neighbouring Mesopotamia (now Iraq) in the fourth century BC by the Persians, the Magi's activities turned increasingly to astronomy and astrology and their learning spread from Babylon throughout the ancient world.

Astrology was a science to the ancients, inextricably entwined with myth and prophecy. That planets and the signs of the zodiac exercised certain influences over individuals, nations and geographical areas was held to be self-evident. To the Magi of Babylon, gazing into the heavens in 7BC, the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces would have held a quite specific meaning.

According to ancient astrological lore, Jupiter was the king of the gods, the planet associated with leaders and kings, Saturn had a particular significance as the protecting planet of the Jews, ruling over the first hour of the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). Pisces was the sign of the Zodiac believed to exercise particular influence on the area around Judea. The Babylonians would almost certainly have been aware of the Jewish prophecies about the king to come (there had been a large Jewish population in the region since the sacking of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 597 BC when large numbers of defeated Jews were taken into captivity). Thus the stars seemed to be pointing quite clearly to a fulfilment of prophecy: that a King of the Jews was about to be born in Judea.

The American scholar of Jewish and early Christian history, Roy Rosenberg, has put a more specific mythological interpretation on this in his paper *The Star of the Messiah Reconsidered*. The God of Israel, Yahweh, was the high father-God and was associated with Saturn, as was Kronos, the Greek version of the high father-God. In Greek myth, Kronos was dethroned by his son Zeus, who was linked to Jupiter. What the planets were suggesting, Rosenberg theorizes, was a conferring of powers from father to son. 'Yahweh was giving to his Messiah a portion of his power and authority.'

The first conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7BC took place on May 27th. We can speculate that, alerted by this, the Magi made ready for their journey. They set out for Jerusalem, either across the Syrian desert, some 550 miles, or travelling from oasis to oasis along one of the two principle trade routes of the fertile crescent. The journey could have taken three months. The second conjunction occurred on October 6 and the third on December 1. David Hughes believes it was the second conjunction that the Magi observed in the sky as they journeyed from their meeting with Herod in Jerusalem to Bethlehem. By this time Jesus had been born.

Matthew gives no clear evidence about when exactly this momentous event occurred but the triple conjunction theory might. The key astrological moment in the conjunction was the 'acronychal' rising. On this day, at the time when the sun was setting in the west. Jupiter and Saturn were rising, in direct opposition, in the east, reaching their highest point at midnight. This occurred on Tuesday, September 15. So could this have been the day that Christ was born? On the night of September 15, 7BC the sun was in the constellation of Virgo. If this date is correct, says Percy Seymour, Jesus could be described as having 'the sun in Virgo' or being 'a son of a virgin.' According to Mr Seymour another piece in the astrological jigsaw which persuaded the Magi that the birth was of truly historic consequence was their knowledge of the astrological principle of 'precession' - the movement of the sun against a background of stars which form the zodiac of astrology.

It takes some 26,000 years for the sun to complete its cycle through each of the 12 constellations of the Zodiac. This is known as 'the Great Year,' which is divided into 12 'Great Months' - Libra, Scorpio, Taurus and so on. Seymour says there is evidence that this principle of precession was understood by the ancient Egyptians at least 4,000 years before the birth of Christ and would thus certainly be known to the Babylonians. The Magi would have known that the sun had moved from the constellation of Aries into the constellation of Pisces around a hundred years earlier. (In our own time, the sun is moving into the constellation of Aquarius).

The combination of a triple conjunction occurring in Pisces at the dawn of the age of Pisces, would have been seen as being of tremendous significance, says Seymour, heralding the coming not simply of a Jewish King, but a leader for the new age. There is something utterly seductive about the triple conjunction theory. It neatly answers the questions of the timing and positioning of the star and makes a compelling argument for the motive of the Magi in making their Journey. Can we really believe that the stars foretold the birth of an extraordinary child, in line with a prophecy of hundreds of years before and that that prophecy was fulfilled? Seymour won't go that far but unlike most astronomers, he refuses to dismiss the possibility altogether. His speciality is the study of magnetic fields in extraterrestrial objects, or 'cosmic magnetism.' While dismissing most astrology as 'bunk' he nonetheless believes that there is strong evidence to suggest that the movement of the stars has a measurable effect on the affairs of men. There is evidence he says, that planetary alignments effect violent activity on the sun, which in turn impinges on the earth's magnetic field.

'It's very frustrating,' says David Hughes. 'If only Matthew or Luke had written one more line saying it was on a Tuesday of the ninth month three years before Herod's death we'd have had the answer. But they didn't and we don't.'

But there remains one more question. If as the stars foretold, Christ was the teacher of the Piscean age, what might they tell us about the prophecies of His second coming in the Age of Aquarius? Using a computerised model of the movement, of the stars over the next 1,000 years, Percy Seymour concludes that a triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Aquarius, in the Age of Aquarius, will occur in or around the year 2497."

Herewith Brother Eric Cave's fourth letter to Tony Benson, Editor of The Testimony magazine, relating to the last article in the series on "Death and Life - the consequences of Adam's sin and their removal in Christ."

Dear Brother Tony. This final letter on the subject of Brother Maddocks deplorable series is written in the spirit of love for all who have put on Christ in baptism however misguided they may be in their understanding of the nature of man and of Christ, as well as in the spirit of Isaiah 58 "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

Firstly then a quotation from Elpis Israel which you dare not print. Page 115 in earlier editions and page 128 in my 1973, 14th edition (my underlining):

“The apostle says, “Levi, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.” Upon the same federal principle, all mankind ate of the forbidden fruit, being in the loins of Adam when he transgressed. This is the only way men by any possibility be guilty of original sin. Because they sinned in Adam - therefore they return to the dust from which Adam came “in whom”, ἐφω, says the apostle, “all sinned” (margin rendering: see comments in Emphatic Diaglott)... Mankind being born of the flesh, and of the will of man, are born into the world under the constitution of Sin. That is, they are the natural born citizens of Satan’s kingdom... There are two states or kingdoms in God’s arrangements, which are distinguished by constitution. These are the Kingdom of Satan, and the Kingdom of God. The citizens of the former are all sinners; the heirs of the latter are saints. But men are not only MADE or constituted sinners, but they become sinners even as by actual transgression. Having attained the majority of their nature, they become accountable and responsible creatures. At this crisis, they may be placed by the divine arranging in a relation to His Word. It becomes to them a tree of life, inviting them to take and eat and “live for ever.” If however they prefer to eat of the world’s forbidden fruit, they come under the sentence of death in their own behalf. They are thus doubly condemned. They are condemned already to the dust as natural born sinners; and secondarily condemned to a resurrection of judgment for rejecting the gospel of the Kingdom of God: by which they become obnoxious to the second death (Note: John Thomas uses the word ‘obnoxious’ in its Victorian meaning of ‘liable to punishment’).”

This extract from the founder of the Christadelphian community is quite contrary (though sadly mixed up with the doctors misunderstanding of human nature) to what Chris Maddocks would have us believe. As I have claimed, for the first 25 years of the community both John Thomas and Robert Roberts believed and taught that the “law of sin and death” was that constitution into which Adam sold himself and all his progeny by transgression; that state of legal bondage, the “sin of the world” (1 John 2:2) from which men are unable to escape until the Lamb of God paid the price of the release of His brother Adam and his progeny from the bondage of King Sin by voluntarily offering Himself as a substitute. Indeed John Thomas referred to “the death of the substitutionary testator” on page 213 of the original edition of *Elpis Israel*. But after the death of the doctor the text was tampered with and some miscreant at the Christadelphian Office deleted the words “substitutionary testator” and replaced them with the single word “mediator” and as one observer said in 1957 “It seems likely that this alteration is of comparatively recent date: it was certainly not made in the doctors lifetime or with his consent and surely to remove words having a clear and precise meaning and replace them with another having a different meaning is nothing short of forgery. A footnote in “The Declaration” referring to the notorious Trinitarian fabrication in 1 John 5 says “It is evidently spurious... but by whom forged is of no great moment, as its design must be obvious to all”!

John Thomas further wrote on page 132 (14th edition):

“As the constitution of sin hath its roots in the disobedience of the first Adam, so also hath the constitution of righteousness root in the obedience of the second Adam. Hence the apostle says, “As through one offence (sentence was pronounced) upon all men unto condemnation; so also through the righteousness (sentence was pronounced) upon all men (that is Jews and Gentiles) unto a justification of life. For as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners: so also through the obedience of the one the many shall be constituted righteous.” “The two Adams are two federal chiefs the first being figurative of the second in these relations. All sinners are in the first Adam: and all the righteous in the second, only on a different principle. Sinners were in the loins of the first when he transgressed; but not in the loins of the latter when he was obedient unto death; therefore the flesh profiteth nothing. For sons of Adam to become Sons of God they must be subjects of an adoption which is only attainable by some divinely appointed means.”

Perhaps Chris Maddocks would like to explain why, if Jesus was under Adamic condemnation, He would need adoption? Dare he claim that the only begotten Son needed adoption into His Father’s family?

The “divinely appointed means” ordained for sons of Adam to become Sons of God is of course by faith. The reward for faith replaced the reward for obedience when God accepted the blood of the lamb which pointed forward to Christ instead of and as a substitute for the blood of Adam, and Hebrews II lists

the various aspects of faith by which righteousness is imputed to those who believe and obtain a “good report.”

Now let me quote from Robert Roberts writing in “The Ambassador” for March 1869:-

“SIN IN THE FLESH” That phrase is metonymical. It is not the expression of a literal element, or principle pervading physical organisation. Literally, sin is disobedience, or an act of rebellion. The impulses which lead to this reside in the flesh, and metonymically came to be called by the name of the act to which they gave birth. In defining first principles, we must be accurate in our conceptions. The impulses which lead to this existed in Adam before transgression as much as they did afterwards, else disobedience would not have occurred.” “There is no such thing as essential evil or sin.”

Robert Roberts also says on page 85, referring to David Handley who had applied for baptism but was deemed deficient in understanding:

“Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatsoever, and the presumption and evidence are the contrary way. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation.”

That declaration by Robert Roberts exempts the Lamb of God from every curse, every defamation that Chris Maddocks and Clause 5 have thrown at Him. Jesus was neither sinner, or possessed by a diabolos. His flesh was as clean as Adam’s before his transgression and as the flesh of every babe born in the image of ‘elohim.’ What tempted Robert Roberts to renounce those beliefs? What prompted him to accept John Thomas’s false teaching that sin is a synonym for human nature is to be found in the events of 1873. Having previously had his own house swept and garnished he went out and returned with the seven devils of the B.A.S.F. since when Christadelphians have been faced with the impossible problem of reconciling a morally sinless Saviour with a physically condemned and defiled sacrifice, which could have redeemed no one.

I find it deplorable that a magazine which purports to exist for the study and defence of Holy Scripture should be more concerned for the study and defence of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith when it comes to the central facts of salvation. “Come let us reason together saith YHWH: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Not so, claim the leaders of the Christadelphian community. Truth is to be found in the B.A.S.F., it was all reasoned out for us by our pioneers last century.’

I am eternally grateful to Brother Phipps who first provoked me into checking the brief piece which you published from me in the February 1997 Testimony and which resulted in the publishing of “The Divine Plan - re-appraisal of some Christadelphian Traditions” and even to Brother Maddocks whose delusions prompted the recent despatch of “It shall come to pass in the last days” to warn my friends of the scriptural consequences to which they are supposedly committed. Although as my correspondence over the last 12 months has proved, only a tiny minority are aware of that commitment. Even last month one well known second generation Christadelphian and valued speaker admitted to me that he had never even possessed a copy of the B.A.S.F. and had no idea what Clause 5 was about. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Galatians 6:6), but surely not the bad things which demean and dishonour and denigrate the Author of our salvation, which derive from that false supposition.

There is much more I would like to say on the subject, but as you intimated in your letter of July 21st “I’m not in a position to publish a letter from you” on account of my disfellowship so it would appear to be a waste of time and your readers unaware of the beauty and simplicity of the Atonement.

With love to you and Sister Mary in Christ Jesus our Lord. Eric Cave.

Note: My letter of 30th August page 3 paragraph 3, (see C/L179, page 29,§2) please note when I wrote “The adjective ‘sinful’ nowhere occurs in scripture,” this should of course be “the adjective ‘sinful’ nowhere occurs in Romans” - please correct.

Brother Phil Parry writes:

Dear Readers, in all my years and membership of the Christadelphian Central Fellowship I was quite ignorant of the fact that so many diversions of opinion existed on the teaching of the inspired Scriptures. But for the forty-seven years as a Nazarene I have warned others of the fact that what Christadelphians have described as being “the Truth” and their being in “The Truth” is nothing more than belief in the incorrect reading and therefore false interpretations of men claiming to understand the Scriptures and the message of the Gospel.

False claims have been made that John Thomas MD brought the Truth to light. With all due respect to him and what truth he taught substantiated by the inspired Scriptures can be accepted as Light, but unfortunately a reading of his books have shown to me that so many of his contradictions and misinterpretations contained in them has shown that he never reached the important stage of finding the Truth as taught by Jesus, the Prophets and the Apostles. Then followed him another man darkening what bit of light, the Dr. had revealed and suppressing any progress beyond his unscriptural views. He was editor of the Christadelphian “Ambassador Magazine” which later was entitled “The Christadelphian,” (Editor, Robert Roberts). Since that time other editors succeeded him such as C.C.Walker, J. Carter, L.G.Sargent, A.H.Nicholls and at present M. Ashton, all claiming allegiance to the Christadelphian Statement of Faith as compiled by R.Roberts yet having opposed some of its doctrine; for example, John Carter and L.G.Sargent, for which see booklets “Outrage on Justice” and “Christadelphian Crises - 1965.”

How many I wonder read their statements in “The Christadelphian” magazine? And how many, if they did, challenged their opposition to the teaching of Dr. Thomas, R.Roberts and the B.A.S.F., “Condemned Flesh” and “Sin in the Flesh”?

Readers of the Nazarene Circular Letter magazine have recently been sent, a booklet containing letters by a lady named Mrs French to John Carter, headed, “You Have Been Warned!” and his replies of an evasive and subtle nature such as adverse criticism of Nazarene literature and teaching, with no attempt to prove his contention with scriptural evidence. Both John Carter and L.G.Sargent opposed the Christadelphian doctrine of “Sin in the Flesh” yet it is still contended for through superficial reading and lack of understanding which in effect brings out the most nonsensical ideas and theories one would hardly expect from Christadelphian editors and leading writers professing to lead their readers on the path of truth and life.

Examples of this theoretical rubbish have been read from “The Testimony” magazine and answered. In like manner the “Christadelphian” magazine, as recently as March 1999 in the editorial by Michael Ashton, contained some of the most ridiculous statements imaginable and shown to be so in a reply by our Brother Gregory on sound scriptural grounds.

Brother Gregory’s comments on Michael Ashton’s statement which he uses as an example and says as a result, “All this is good common sense and commendable counsel,” I also agree with Brother Gregory but sadly Michael does not follow his own advice in saying “The only way properly to understand the message of Genesis is to be guided by other inspired Scriptures which comment upon it.” Very well, if we are agreed that the book of Genesis is the inspired record, why not accept what is stated, that God created man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life to set in motion the respiratory system and thus causing him to become a living soul. From the very history of Christadelphianism when contending with the doctrine of immortal soulism, the Genesis account has been quoted and explained that the first man was of our own identical nature which we at the present time possess and to strengthen this fact Ezekiel chapter 18 is quoted to prove that a soul can die - “The soul that sinneth it shall die.”

However, I know that this is not a correct example of reading Genesis and its message, for in quoting from Ezekiel 18:4 is a complete violation of God’s statement in that chapter and its context in that it not only speaks of the soul or living person being of a corruptible nature but also of being put to death as a result of committing sin.

This is a mishandling of the inspired record and Michael Ashton as editor should be made aware of it, and his readers. Ezekiel chapter 18 is teaching obedience to the precepts and statutes of God as conditions

for continued existence in which were noted sins unto inflicted death, not a dying in the natural order of things, for even those who were not guilty died eventually and of the latter guiltless it was said of them, "They shall live, they shall not die." The context is important here and should not be violated in the corrupt way Christadelphians have used it past and present.

If for example, the book of Genesis is written in the language Moses used, then what was said to Adam concerning the forbidden eating of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die," have we the authority to say that, "surely die" does not mean the same in Genesis 20:7 as it means in Genesis 2:17? And because Adam did not die in the day he ate of the forbidden tree, are you justified in saying that the evening and the morning in the same language used, we think, in the Hebrew, by Moses, meant a thousand years when such a statement was never used by David or Peter in that context of Genesis 2:17, but in David's case the magnitude of God and in the case of Peter, God's longsuffering and mercy in contrast with man?

You also say that if we do not understand or know the teaching of Genesis we could not therefore understand the gospel records properly. Well, it is evident that Paul understood Genesis properly and based his understanding of the atoning work of God in Christ on Genesis in his Epistles, especially to the Romans and the Corinthians.

In many respects Christadelphians misinterpret Romans 5:12 as referring to natural decay and death when Paul means "death by sin" not death as an appointment for all created species, but you, their Editor, are now on the side of the evolutionists in that you have stated "Genesis goes on to reveal that when Adam and Eve chose to follow earthly thinking they became sinful dying creatures," What then, dear Editor? Have you told your committee brethren of this new-found theory from your reading of Genesis and suggested to them that it should replace Clause V in that, unlike Clause V it does not accuse God of making Adam and Eve sinful dying creatures and thereby also avoiding your problem of inflicted death for sin in the day of eating? A sentence not carried into effect through the Love and Mercy of God and His Son?

Both your pioneers, Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts read Genesis 3:19 and each gave a different definition of how the penalty was to be put into effect; R. Roberts, "that it required a miracle to depress to the level of the beasts that perish," and Dr. Thomas, "It required no miracle, left to himself without any further change to superior nature Adam would eventually die and return to the dust from whence he came" = the common death of all species.

Neither of these men were correct in regard to the "death by sin" but both are worshipped as idols to whom Christadelphians having the same confused views and theories, can turn for confirmation of their own unscriptural views and theories. They think one of them is bound to support them and they do not bother to find out from the pastors and teachers Jesus appointed for this work (and still does) before His ascension to the Right-Hand of God.

We have read much recently from the books of Kings and Chronicles about the good kings who destroyed the idols worshipped by Israel and whose successors reared them up again. The history of Christadelphianism has proved very similar. False theories of men worshipped as custodians of The Truth have been put down by the sword of the Spirit at various periods but such idols have been set up again as "The Truth to be received" and I suppose this state of things will continue to try the faith of the true servants of God and cause them to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the saints because the Word of God is in them as a burning fire that will not be quenched by the spirit of falsehood and ignorance.

I respect members of the Christadelphian community who maybe do not read their magazine or perhaps cannot afford it, but those who do read such pathetic theories by the Editor and not even in the Genesis account, but are content to believe him, should expect no sympathy, therefore where the latter are concerned I pull no punches. Our Brother Gregory should be complimented for his comments and reasoning through the Spirit Word on the views expressed by Michael Ashton which reminded me of what my friend said of Jesus and "His need for salvation because He had a nature that could be tempted" - his letter from Tasmania to me is in our Circular Letter No. 176 (March/April 1999) and also my reply, though restricted to some of the important points. I felt so disgusted with some of his statements that I began to wonder whether his mentality was stable and that he imagined himself to be an inspired servant of Christ understanding all the Bible records whether written in Hebrew or Greek. But his mishandling of the Word in such a boastful

and superior manner convinced me that whether he understood Hebrew or Greek he was not rightly dividing the Word of Truth. On page 6 of our Circular Letter, second paragraph from the top he attempts to explain Paul's words concerning Christ's sacrifice where the Sin of the world was laid on Him, "made sin for us," as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21. He proceeds, "He died unto sin" cannot mean "He died for our sin, as I have heard it explained." Quite true but he has not heard it explained by a Nazarene in that way. His own explanation is far worse, for in actual fact Jesus never sinned through all the trials and temptations that He experienced yet my friend says, "He had within Him that sin (which He entirely suppressed, of course, but it was there) therefore He needed redemption; death no longer having dominion."

He goes on to ridicule and set aside as stupidity the interpretation of Ben Wilson, author of the Diaglott, by saying that as Jesus could be tempted, this meant that through His begetting of God through Mary He was capable of temptation and this temptation-propensity was sin and therefore He was made sin for us and by dying He could no longer be tempted and if we accept this and die with Him to sin this is the meaning of the Atonement! A man with sin in His flesh by temptation and not yielding to it, redeemed from death? What death?

In this case my friend must accept that Adam at his creation was made sin, for it is obvious that Adam could be tempted even as Eve who was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Is it not obvious that Adam could be tempted when put, in the garden but he could not sin without the entrance of the Law of Prohibition?

How much more nonsense must Christadelphians be forced to accept?

Another example of his illogical reasoning is found in his quotation from Zechariah 9:9 where he says according to the Hebrew interpretation Jesus needed salvation. Can anyone, knowing that the devout Jews were looking for their Messiah and Saviour think they would rejoice greatly in the fact that He needed salvation Himself? "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation" said Simeon, who "waited for the consolation of Israel." Was Simeon mistaken? Are we to ignore the Angel's message to Joseph, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost, and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20,21). Did the ability to be tempted constitute the sins of His people? I very much doubt it. There was much more involved in that statement of the Angel and it goes further back than Israel as John says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16,17). Was Jesus a just man when God approved of Him at the Jordan, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"?

Did John the Baptist proclaim "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away first His own sin and then the sin of the world"?

Jesus said, "He that believeth on me (much is involved here) is not condemned:" He is addressing persons of flesh and blood so therefore if you people of flesh and blood believe for that reason, that having flesh and blood bodies you are under condemnation or condemned, then you have not believed in the Son of God, that Just One of whom they rejoiced and whom Ananias informed Paul at Damascus "Thou shalt see that Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth" (Acts 22:14).

Please note: The Law of Sin and Death is not a physical law of our being, if it were, how could Paul state in the present tense Romans 8:1,2?

Have any the licence to manipulate the Scriptures that disagree with their false traditional doctrines and say it is prospective, like my friend has said of redemption? Think again at this season of the year and think soberly, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Brother Phil Parry

Further comment: Before going to Tasmania my friend and I worked together and on one occasion the subject came up about Adam's sin and the result being decay and corruption; he quoted the Apostles words concerning those in Christ as "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." He applied

this corruption as being the sentence upon Adam for lust and I told him I had never believed it to be so and that it applied in my view, to the corrupt and immoral state of the world at the time, for no one except Jesus could be said to have escaped natural death or any other death which ended in corruption. His reply was “I had not thought of it in that sense.” Yet we have editors and other Christadelphians still quoting these words out of their meaning and context. I have pointed out to him (my friend) also the statement by Paul in Romans, “And so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned” (margin “in whom all sinned”), was not a matter of injustice when seen and described in Hebrews chapter 7 in relation to Melchizedec, Jesus, Abraham and the Levitical Priest-hood. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedec therefore Levi paid tithes also to Melchizedec but not in person or actual fact but by reason of being in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedec met him. In like manner, Romans 5:12 (“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that [in whom] all have sinned”) can be applied to Adam’s sin and his posterity. All were in his loins and therefore considered as members of his body when he sinned, yet they could not have sinned personally for they had not yet been born. God in His mercy imputed them as having sinned in the Federal sense of being in the One Man Adam, so that by enlightenment to their position as concluded under the One Sin of Adam they might, by belief and faith in the One Man’s obedience, Jesus Christ, many could be justified and made righteous.

This is the legal and moral position whereby men can be redeemed and made free and from Hebrews 7:1 to 25 it is easily understood and appreciated. For example, Paul’s words in Romans 8:1,2 (“There is therefore now no condemnation t& them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death.”); if this position was a physical one he could not have used such words in the present tense.

P.Parry.

The Lord’s Prayer

Introduction. When I was a young man and agreed to take my turn as a Presiding Brother in the Christadelphian Ecclesia to which I belonged, it was with some considerable fear and trepidation that I considered the prospect of leading the Ecclesia in prayer.

All the Presiding Brethren seemed to be so fluent and it seemed no effort for them to preside, so how should I get started? As my first presiding appointment drew nearer so my anxiety grew. I had heard of some who had started by writing out their prayers and this is what I decided I must do. Surely there could be nothing worse than “drying up” in the middle of a prayer, loosing track of what one had said with panic setting in and this was a real fear for me. So now it was settled in my mind I would most certainly write down everything I had to say, at least on my first Sunday morning. It was the main prayer that I worried about most of all. What should I say? What sort of things should I include and was there anything I should avoid? I asked my mother’s advice. Well, that’s what mothers are for, isn’t it? She said simply, “Base your main prayer on the Lord’s prayer.” Oh! You can’t imagine what a relief that was to me! Now I would know what to say! What a good idea. So out came my Bible - Matthew 6, verses 9 to 13, but reading through it in less than twenty seconds it seemed Jesus wasn’t saying all that much. It was so short. How could I possible make use of it? No sooner would everyone be standing up than it would be time for them to sit down again. All the Presiding Brethren I had ever heard never gave such short prayers as that but went on for several minutes and sometimes for many, many minutes until people started shuffling their feet, and still the prayer went on! But then Jesus said that no one is heard for their much speaking, which was a relief in a way to me, because finding enough to say was my problem and so for the moment I returned to my anxiety once more. However, I persevered with Matthew 6:9-13 and slowly began to realise just how much was in the Lord’s Prayer after all.

Now these thought were brought, back to me some years ago when I went to a Fraternal Gathering where the speaker was talking about Prayer. Yes, he told of one occasion when he heard a young presiding brother recite the Lord’s Prayer for the main prayer one Sunday morning and when he said “Amen” about half the congregation hesitated for a moment, then sat down as if thinking to themselves, “Is that all we’re getting?”

Well, whatever we think about saying the Lord's Prayer during a Sunday morning service, I am sure that young brother was listened to. What is the point of a prayer if it is too long so that most people's minds have wandered off on some other thoughts and are no longer listening to what is being said? How often does it happen that some comment the speaker said starts the mind going in some other direction. It happens to me all too often and when we hear the brother say "Amen" we automatically sit down and then realize we don't know what has been said on our behalf.

But to our subject, The Lord's Prayer, which I shall go through phrase by phrase.

Our Father which art in heaven.

It is God whom we are addressing, who alone is uncreate. That thought is beyond our comprehension so at once we are out of our depth. There are, I believe, three infinities, time, space and power. Uncreated God is eternal and so has always lived throughout the infinity of time. Space is distance in all directions. There is no limit to space as it is unending in every direction. All that God has created by His infinite power may extend into all space. To say it does not is to put limitations on our Creator and He has no limitations. In saying He has no limitations, except of course that He cannot do wrong; I believe He must therefore be perfect. Words seem inadequate to express such sublime matters and some things may be seen to be so though not expressed satisfactorily. So my next observation is similarly hard to prove in words but I believe that because God is perfect in all His ways He must therefore be Love. We know this to be true of course because He tells us so, though it is not seen to be the case by most of mankind. Yet it would be unthinkable for God not to love and care for His creation and would it not also show imperfection? Because He loves His creatures He shows them loving-kindness, mercy and compassion in His grace towards them.

God knows ail, understands all and has all wisdom. Herein we see God's power for by His knowledge, understanding and wisdom God created all things and dwells in all things. This is heaven. This is the universe. His universe.

When God created the earth He formed it to be inhabited. The angels rejoiced and God saw everything He had made and it was very good. That is, it was very good for the purpose He made it and so it was well pleasing to Him.

Having made man, God gave him free will. Man had a choice, to serve God or not- The Tree of the knowledge of good and evil was placed in the Garden of Eden for this purpose. God gave Adam and Eve the law, "Thou shall not..." and law gives choice, hence the need for the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The word "good" here is sometimes translated "pleasant" or "pleasing," so it was the tree of the knowledge of what was pleasant and evil. To the mind of selfish man so much that, is sinful seems pleasant and desirable and men become lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Not that all pleasures are bad for that would be nonsense as we all find great pleasure in God's creation, as He does; pleasure in the beauty and perfection of nature all around us, but there is pleasure also in selfishness and greed summed up for us by John, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." Those who endeavour to put God first in their lives separate themselves from these desires and lusts for God is separate from them- He sets Himself apart from all sin and this we acknowledge when we say

Hallowed be Thy Name

Hallowed means set apart, as does Holy. Set apart from all that is not. good in His sight but even more than this for though the angels are holy and they give God pleasure and they do His will, God is separate from them in as much as He alone is uncreate while all else was or is created and that makes God holiest of all - to be sanctified and glorified. Do we think of God with all due respect? He is our Creator, our King, our God and we cannot esteem Him too highly in our thoughts. Psalm 29, "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

What a contrast to ourselves. Man is small and weak and all too often, erring. A creature of the dust only living for a short time, knowing very little and understanding less, and with a poor wisdom of his own. Without God he is selfish, self important, self-centred and is sure he knows so much and will yet find out all

things relating to all he sees, big or small, striving always to live longer and more successfully in gratifying his own senses. But man in his natural state cannot have access to the Tree of life lest he continue in his unsatisfactory state.

Is it too much to think of the Garden of Eden as being a small part of heaven? A place where God's will was done up until Adam and Eve sinned? God was their Law-giver, their King and they obeyed His authority. But when they sinned God was no longer their King for they had obeyed another authority - that of self will. Ever since then most people have been pleasing themselves - doing their own thing and going their own way without God. However, all through the ages there have been a few who have been prepared to listen to what God has to say and they find by His grace they are offered and promised far more than all the things this life can bring, heavenly blessing for evermore and it is God who has devised every way He can to bring people back to Him in order to give them these blessings and as a result there are those who pray

Thy Kingdom come.

Eden restored and much more besides, for at this time the elect of God will become the youngest of the angels of heaven. Their work is to rule over "one, five or ten cities," immortals ruling over mortals, caring for their needs, teaching, advising, guiding in the ways of goodness, purity, truth and love. All those qualities we see and admire in Jesus Christ will be theirs and His law will go out to all the world from Jerusalem. Not man's law but God's law and Jesus Christ will be King over all the earth. The Psalmist looked forward to this age when he said. "Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains (those ruling for Jesus Christ) shall bring peace to the people and the little hills by righteousness..." Psalm 72:16, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon," is I believe a reference to the work of the elect in the Kingdom. Jesus was that corn of wheat, that single grain, which fell into the ground and died which brought forth fruit to the glory of God and here we have a handful of corn, the firstfruits of His harvest, the elect of God yet to be placed in the top of the mountains to rule over the earth in righteousness. This Psalm 72 is a picture of the saints in authority ruling as kings and priests ensuring that

Thy will be done in the earth as it is done in heaven.

In the Kingdom age all things that offend will be cast out and only God's will will be done. It is my opinion that in the Kingdom, people, that is the mortal population, will still have temptations to sin just as we have today but will not be allowed to sin because that would cause others to suffer as a result. Isaiah 30:21 tells us of this time when "thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee saying, this is the way. Walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." This is in contrast to the present age of which Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

We who look to God as our King endeavour to do His will as Jesus did but we are not so determined as He was and that is our fault. We have no need to fail in temptations. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are and overcame every trial so that He never sinned.

"Who convicteth me of sin?" No one. "Not my will but Thine be done" was ever His resolution and there is no reason to suppose it comes any harder for us than it did for Him "who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (Hebrews 5:7). "He was heard in that he feared." The way for us to overcome is the same, for no one is tempted beyond that which he is able to withstand. "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." However, in the Kingdom age things will be somewhat different for the voice behind them will thwart any opportunity for lust to conceive and bring forth sin as James expresses it. How else can all things that offend be cast out and only God's will be done?

Give us this day our daily bread.

This daily bread embraces all our daily needs. They are really very simply, food, shelter and clothing. Not all we want by any means, but it is all we need. In our affluent society our biggest problem is that we

are thoroughly spoilt. We have so much more than we need yet we still want more and more. Our basic daily needs are very few and these are provided in abundance for most of us, Matthew 16:31, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, or yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." So why do we pray "give us this day our daily bread"? There are several reasons. Firstly, it reminds us whose we are and whom we serve. When we ask God to give us this day our daily bread we are acknowledging Him as the Provider, which of course He is. The words "El Shaddai" are translated "Almighty God" but could be translated as "All Providing God."

Let us think for a moment of a mother suckling her infant. She is providing support, warmth, comfort and nourishment, in fact all the loving care her child needs. She is providing all her infant's requirements. Now the Hebrew word for "breast" is "shad" and it has the same derivation as "Shaddai." I think this gives us a very touching illustration of our relationship to God. Perhaps all of you have seen how a child will look up into its mother's eyes with those wide trusting eyes while suckling. I don't know though I can guess what those eyes do for you mothers but I know that when ever I have seen them it has sent a pleasant tingle right through me. I wonder, do we look up, as it were, into the face of God with the same trust and do we give Him the pleasure and joy He looks for? "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Another aspect of this request to give us this day our daily bread is that we are also asking on behalf of others. It is not "Give me this day..." but "Give us." The second commandment is to love our neighbours as ourselves and so we ask for others the things we would ask for ourselves. Indeed, from time to time we are likely to see that our neighbour's needs are greater than our own as, for instance in a time of illness or bereavement. Then we have the responsibility of paying greater attention to others in our prayers than to ourselves, while we must not at any time overlook the practical and material help which we can also give. Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate how we should do likewise. To pray for one another is a duty as Paul reminds us and in the Old Testament we have the example of Saul (1 Samuel 12:23) where he is encouraging the people to follow the Lord and adds, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

What of our desires apart from our needs? "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name I will do for you" promised Jesus. That sounds like having an open cheque book drawn on the Bank of Heaven. So it is, but let us "not ask amiss that we should spend it upon our own lusts," warns James. Our asking must not be selfish but in accordance with God's will. Jesus gave a reason for doing whatsoever we ask in His name and it was so that the Father may be glorified in the Son, so perhaps the best guide we can have as to what we should ask is to first ask ourselves the question "Is this what Jesus Christ, would ask if He were in my place?" "Does this glorify God?" Keep this rule to the forefront of our minds and we will avoid asking amiss.

Then there is the spiritual aspect of this request for daily bread. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This is our spiritual bread. Every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God is contained the Bible. We call it the Word of God and in that Word, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the key for without Him the Bible has no real value. Jesus makes it all in all to and for us. In the first chapter of John's gospel we read "the word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Then in the 6th chapter and at verse 52 Jesus says of Himself "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I give is my flesh. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day." The only way we can feed upon Jesus is to study the Word, the Scriptures, daily. Give us this day our daily bread. Knowledge, understanding and wisdom come into this too. The knowledge of the Scriptures is our bread. Understanding the Scriptures is to gain nourishment from that bread. Wisdom to apply that knowledge and understanding in our lives is walk in the way to life eternal.

Yes, this Bible is as much our daily bread as any meat we put on the table.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

We entered into a new agreement with our heavenly Father at our baptism and at that time any past misdeeds were washed away and were gone forever. We are now in a new relationship, we are His children by adoption and He is our Father. We are brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and in Him. He died for us of His own free will. In Him we can have complete forgiveness day by day. There are so many pleasures around us in this life but we are not tempted above that which we are able to withstand, but how hard do we try to do our Father's will? Jesus, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers with strong crying and tears unto His Father who was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared. Could it ever be said of us that we do as Jesus did in our determination to overcome our temptations? Is this really the extent to which we go in our fight against self-will in order to do God's will? If it is we shall sin no more. And if we fail? He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins if we ask Him.

Should we ask for forgiveness for sins not yet committed? "Lord, please forgive us next weeks sins"! We have heard such prayers from Christadelphian platforms but where is the resolve not to sin ever again? If we sin it is our fault and we cannot put the blame or any share of it anywhere else.

What about forgiving those who offend us? "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" means what it says. Forgive in like manner or in the same measure. "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." That is perfectly fair isn't it, so dare we ask for preferential treatment? 'Lord, I haven't fully forgiven my brother, but please fully forgive me.' If we forgive with reservations, then how can we expect to be forgiven unconditionally? We must forgive with no strings attached. It's not easy and with human nature as it is it may well be impossible but with God's strength in us we can do it and indeed we must for we need forgiveness in order to enter into life eternal. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

Let us note first of all that we are asking God to lead us. To lead us where He wants us to go and to do His will, not our own. But, is this really what we want? Would we not all rather choose for ourselves which way we go and what we do? But then we fall into temptation and in our weak moments we sin. Temptation is all around us. He doesn't lead us into temptation beyond what we are able to overcome, but He does allow us to be tempted and in fact uses temptations to build our characters. Our temptations are our problems and our problems are our opportunities. Opportunities to show God that we will serve Him and put Him first. If it were not for such temptation we could not grow strong in faith and love, so we ask God to lead us and when we follow that path we can go in His strength without falling.

If we look at the relationship between sin and evil in its simplest form we see that the sin one person does causes evil for others. If however we love our neighbours as ourselves then we would not wish to bring evil upon them. This alone should give us reason for never committing sin. Nevertheless, the world is so full of sinners that the evil they cause is part of everyday life and when we ask God to deliver us from evil we are asking Him to change the course of events for us. I have heard it said that God does no such thing, but He does, else why did Jesus Christ teach us to pray "deliver us from evil"? So are we delivered from evil? I would say it is one of the greatest blessing in this life and one for which we should continually express our heart-felt thanks.

Why does God answer prayers the way He does? He doesn't always deliver from evil, for both John the Baptist and Peter were in prison at different times. John was beheaded, Peter miraculously released. Both Stephen and Paul were stoned. Stephen died but Paul survived. Why? The answer may well be in Hebrews 11, that great chapter on faith which tells of so many who suffered evil and verse 35 tells of those "who were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted, tortured (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth..." Isn't life easy for us? We don't know how much we have been spared. During the war years it was difficult for some. There were those who suffered quite considerable hardships and some were sent to prison for being conscientious objectors to fighting. That is

all behind us now so what of the future. If we are called upon to suffer for our faith are we prepared to love God and put Him first? Jesus did not ask for those twelve legions of angels to save Him from the designs of evil men.

For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever.

As we have gone through the Lord's Prayer we have seen how it started with praise to God, then requests, firstly for His Kingdom to come then for our daily needs. Next for forgiveness, then for guidance and finally the prayer closes as it began, with praise. As an example of prayer for us to follow it is unsurpassable but Jesus Christ deliberately left something out yet it is very important that we do not. So what was it that Jesus left out of the Lord's Prayer and we must include in ours? It is that Jesus never asks us to say "Thank you." I think the reason for this is because He leaves thanksgiving to flow naturally from grateful hearts who appreciate all that God has done for us in giving us life in the first place, providing all we need for this present life, then promising us a wonderful future through His Son who so willingly gave Himself for us that we may have the opportunity of life eternal. "Thank you" is a small response but surely it comes from the heart.

In conclusion I would like to make a few observations of a more general nature regarding prayer. God speaks to us through the Bible and we speak to Him through prayer. "Enter thy closet and pray in secret." It is not unlike a telephone really but far, far better. If we should want to speak directly with the Managing Director of a large organisation, or perhaps to the Prime Minister or even the Queen, what are our chances of a direct line? Nil, I would think. But God is always available and waiting, never too busy but ready for us so that He can answer us. So how often do we pray? Twice a day? Once a week? Or perhaps only that 999 call when something has gone desperately wrong? Paul says "Pray without ceasing."

Again, do we say grace before every meal or only sometimes? Do we say grace before having a meal in a restaurant, witnessing for Christ? Or is that rather like the Pharisees standing in the street corners to be seen of men? We cannot lay down hard and fast rules for each other as it is our heart that must be right before God in order that our prayer be accepted. Our prayers should be earnest, fervent, sincere. Paul says "strive" which means "agonize" - agonize in your prayers. Pray without ceasing. "Without ceasing" is the same word used where we read of Peter who when walking on the water to go to Jesus began to sink so Jesus "stretch out" His arm to save Peter. Pray without ceasing is to pray, reaching out and up to God.

Let's go back to the illustration of the child. Not an infant now but grown a little older and able to walk and run about. When he wants to be picked up what does he do? He reaches up - he stretches out his arms and pleads to be picked up because he wants comforting or is tired of walking on his own and if he isn't picked up he runs in front and gets in the way quite determined that he will be picked up. Remember the parable of the importunate man who wanted three loaves so that he could have a midnight feast with his friends? It was his persistent audacity that got him what he wanted!

Whatever it is we want never let us presume to tell God how. Leave that to Him. The first miracle that Jesus performed was to change water to wine. All Mary said was "They have no wine" She left the rest to Jesus and He didn't say, "Don't you think they've had enough?" No, He provided gallons and gallons, hundreds of bottles of the very best champagne!

Of course, we don't always get what we want. Why should we expect to? If when the Sunday dinner is being prepared your child comes asking for treats you would of course say "no, not before dinner." So it is for us. We may not get what we want now, but there is something better for us soon.

When God formed the earth it was for the purpose of calling out a people for His Name, who would give honour and glory and praise to Him. In the age to come all the earth will be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. By the love, mercy and grace of God we can be there. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Brother Russell Gregory.

We are grateful to Brother Bill and Sister Maureen Hold of Queensland for the following article which they found in a box on which was written the name “Phillips.” As there is no name attached to the article itself we assume it may have been written by the late Brother David Phillips of Aberdare and sent to Bill’s father many years ago:

2nd Epistle of Peter Chapter 3

In verse 1 we read, “This second epistle beloved I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the Holy Spirit, and Prophets; and the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”

The first epistle was written in view of the trials which those to whom it was addressed were then enduring and the persecutions which they had reason to anticipate. The main object of that epistle was to comfort them in their trials.

This second epistle appears to have been written not so much in view of persecution and bodily suffering as in view of the fact that there were teachers of error among them and the tendency of whose doctrines was to turn them away from the Gospel. To those teachers of error and to the dangers to which they were exposed on that account there is no allusion in the first epistle and it would seem not to be improbable that Peter had been informed that there were such teachers among them.

This was a point of great importance which had not been noticed in the former epistle and that an effort should be made by apostolic influence to arrest the progress of error, to counteract the influence of the false teachers and to confirm the Christians of Asia Minor in the belief of the truth.

A large part of the epistle therefore is occupied in characterising the teachers of error in showing that they would certainly lose their hope of salvation. One of the prominent errors was the denial of the Lord that bought them, “For ye are bought with a price,” says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians (Chapter 6, verse 20). The Christians are purchased and by right of purchase should therefore be employed as He directs.

The price is that which is paid for an article and which in view of the seller is a fair compensation why he should part with it and which in view of the buyer is a fair compensation, or a valuable consideration. When an article is bought for a consideration it becomes wholly the property of the particular purchaser.

This is a real question - why in the purpose of God is the forgiveness of sin associated with bloodshedding and sacrifice? Why in other words, was the death of Christ necessary for the salvation of sinners? Why did Jesus choose to be a willing and submissive victim, or what God intends us to learn from it? Perhaps it is equally true that there is not nor ever has been a sect able to put forward a clear explanation of the Atonement for the reason that all alike go wrong from the first step in believing that natural death or corruptibility is the penalty of the sin in Eden - the basic error which makes it impossible to understand the meaning of the Cross; which in the time when Peter wrote his epistle to the present, all sects and this is universal, believe that natural death was the penalty and direct result of the sin in Eden.

There are only two natures known to the Bible; the natural with the life in the blood and the incorruptible with the life in the Spirit. Where then shall we look for the explanation of the fall of man? It was undoubtedly a matter of law. A tremendous change occurred certainly but it was a legal change, not a physical one. The change was in Adam’s relationship to God from an obedient son living in harmony with his Creator by a simple act of disobedience he alienated himself. Adam was then cut off from the tree of life and expelled from Eden. He was in a legally dead condition and estranged from God. How the Almighty and all-wise God solved the problem is in the fact of the Gospel of salvation. It was for ages a hidden mystery concealed under types and allegories,

This truth, Abraham and the prophets were able to discern by the eye of faith, had to wait the appearance on earth of the one who was Himself the “Key” to the mystery but even since then it has been hid from the wise and prudent because to them the Cross is foolishness.

The language is positive; Christians have been redeemed, or recovered, or reconciled to God. The penalty of the law having been met. This valuable consideration was the blood of Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice, an offering, a ransom which would accomplish the great ends in maintaining the truth and the majesty of God's law.

Nothing else could or would have done this. There was no price which the sinner could pay, no atonement which he could make and consequently if Christ had not sacrificed Himself the sinner would have been the servant of sin.

As therefore the Christian is thus purchased by baptism into Christ's death he is thus purchased, ransomed, redeemed therefore he is duty bound to devote himself to God only and to flee from unrighteousness

In the 2nd chapter, verse 2 we read, "And many shall follow their pernicious ways by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." It cannot be a harmless thing then to hold erroneous opinions nor can men be safe who deny the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. It is truth not error that provides man's salvation and the erroneous opinions on this subject may be dangerous to our peace and happiness because of erroneous teaching and the true understanding of the great plan of redemption as centred in Christ Jesus.

It is a very remarkable circumstance that those who had denied the essential doctrine of the Gospel had been so frequently licentious. The Apostle Peter says that they had inculcated opinions which tended to licentiousness, such as the doctrine of original sin which gives license for their evil ways. Many forms of religious error have somewhat a connection with corrupt thinking. Men who are corrupt at heart often seek to obtain for their corruptions the sanction of religion, again embracing the doctrine of sin in the flesh. By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, because says Peter, they were professors of religion and religion would seem to be held responsible for their conduct; they were professed teachers of religion, many would understand them as expounding the true doctrine whereas they were teaching falsely.

Verse 3 "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you, whose Judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." Mankind should never forget that there is an eye of unslumbering vigilance always upon him and that everything that he does is witnessed by the One who will yet render exact justice to all men. No man however careful he might be to try to conceal his actions or however bold in transgression or however unconcerned he may seem to be can hope that justice will linger or destruction always slumber.

Verse 4. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned" (Children of Israel). Peter now proceeds to the proof of the proposition that these persons would be punished and in verses 5,6 and 7, "and spared not the old world but saved Noah," and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes and delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

The principle design of this 3rd chapter is to demonstrate in opposition to the objections of scoffers, that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to the world - that the present order of things will be destroyed and will be replaced by a new government and to show the effect which it should have upon our minds.

This 3rd chapter without any very exact arrangement by the author essentially consists of two parts:

1. The argument of the objectors to the doctrine of the second coming and

2. that He will take vengeance upon those who know not God. In doing this the apostle Peter calls their attention to the importance of attending diligently to the things which had been spoken by the prophets and to the commandments of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, reminding them that it was to be expected that in the last days scoffers, who would deride the doctrines of the true Christian faith, and would maintain that there was no evidence that what had been predicted would be fulfilled; the argument of Peter in reply to this objection and a strong affirmation of the truth of the doctrine of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter adverts to the argument on which they professed to-reply that there is no sign or indication that those events were likely to take place, that there was no natural causes in operation which could lead to such

results. The fact of the stability of the universe since the time of creation demonstrated that, the predictions regarding the destruction of the world order could not occur.

The argument of Peter in reply to this objection from the long-continued stability of the earth, are the following: He refers to the flood and with just as much plausibility it might have been urged then that the earth had stood for thousands of years, and that there were no natural causes to produce that change. It might have been asked where the immense amount of water necessary to drown the world could come from and perhaps it might have been argued that God was too good to destroy the world again.

Every objection which could be put forth to the destruction of the world order by fire could have been put forth to its destruction by water and as in fact those objections, as the events showed, would have no real force, so they should be regarded as having no real force now. The flood is a fact beyond any doubt, so therefore the present world order will be burned up.

The Apostle Peter says that no argument against the prediction of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ can be derived from the fact that hundreds or thousands of years are suffered to elapse before the fulfilment of the prediction. What seems long to man is not long to God. He does not measure time as man does. They soon die and if they cannot execute their purpose in the brief period of life they cannot at all. But this cannot apply to God; He has infinite ages in which to execute His purposes and therefore no argument can be derived from the fact that God's purposes are long delayed to prove that He will not execute them at all.

Verse 8. "But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Verse 10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

With this serious warning the practical suggestions which Peter exhorts in this 2nd epistle is illustrative of the effect which these considerations should have on the mind and are among the most important parts of this 2nd epistle:

1. We should be holy, devout and serious.
2. We should look forward with deep interest to the second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ when the New Heavens and earth which are to succeed the present order of things is established.
3. We should be diligent and watchful that we may be found at the return of the Saviour without spot and blameless.
4. We should be cautious that we be not seduced and be led away by the errors which deny these great doctrines.
5. We should grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on our behalf.

Finally we conclude by reading the 17th verse (chapter 3) "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

Author believed to be David Phillips

From Whence Come Wars Among You?

The Brotherhood's divided and contentious history is excused on many grounds – the concern for Truth; too much tolerance (or too little); and human nature's perversity, which makes perfection unattainable. But we would suggest there is an underlying cause which we have failed to recognize and that until we do, God's full blessing and sweet fellowship are things we can talk and dream about but not experience.

With the death of Brother Thomas the brotherhood became organized in its present form by Brother Roberts- The personal influence which he exercised can be judged by documents of his which became binding on us: "The Instructor," "Ecclesial Guide," "Declaration," "Bible Companion," and of course our present "Statement of Faith."

Any errors or excesses we have readily excused on the grounds of his ability and his total commitment and also because he considered apostasy as inevitable before Christ's very imminent return.

Division became rife and was accepted almost fatalistically. As it still is today. His insistence that his own definitions and hypotheses be used as the touchstone of Truth caused a particularly sad and unnecessary division - the Suffolk Street. The proof of this lies of course in the Reunion. And yet our loyalty to Brother Roberts would admit no fault on his part and little in the way of repentance at a grievous wrong.

A similar division which still subsists was caused by equally futile differences of definition on the matter of "responsibility," between Brother J.J. Andrew and Brother Roberts. To not agree with Brother Roberts' definitions was to be branded a heretic.

Another division came about when Brother Roberts labelled Brother Turney "Renunciator" (one who denies Jesus was of our nature). Now the sad irony of this lies in the fact that Brother Turney held the same views of Jesus' nature as Brother Thomas (and the brotherhood in general) until Brother Roberts brought in the view, rejected by Brother Thomas in 1869, of sentence implanted corruptibility and bias to sin. (See note below). This view we still (supposedly) hold (Clause 5). A view which was a matter of disfellowship in 1869 became a matter of fellowship in 1874. The truth of what I write is fully evidenced, making Brother Robert's definition, "a sentence which defiled" a "vital truth" (?), which excluded not only Brother Turney but would excluded Brother Thomas (who had firmly rejected it),

Objective Bible study effectively ended with the advent of Brother Roberts' study becoming that of expositions: e.g. Eureka was elevated to the status of an inspired interpretation of Revelation. And the writings of Bro. Roberts became "the standard works of the Truth"(?). Any gaps in our knowledge we have been loathe to admit, thinking it devolves upon us to pronounce on every subject, seeing "we have the Truth."

"Those who cause divisions" stand condemned (Romans 16:17) and yet where is the brotherhood's recognition and repentance of these wrongs? Can such a divided household use the expression "Our Father"? And can it claim, in taking the bread, to be "one body" - the "Lord's body"?

Our plea is that we should get back to our very roots as a community and that we get "back to the Bible" in direct, objective study and that we freely admit the wrong turns which led and are still leading us into divided bitterness in which the words "love one another" are becoming a mockery and a condemnation of those who profess fellowship in Christ.

Brother Dennis Hayward.

Note: Brother Roberts' definition "A sentence which defiled..." Clause 5 implies – because Adam, in his "very good" state, sinned voluntarily, God planted a bias to sin in him which made him (and us) "very

bad.” And so he was made to sin further and was punished for breaking laws which God had made it impossible to keep, i.e., a ‘devil’ planted in us prompts us to sin, according to this view!

Letters and Writings of Robert Roberts, William Ellis and Edward Turney reproduced from “The Lamp” 1874 under the heading of

“Goliath With His Head Cut Off”

18 Lamartine Terrace
St Ann’s Well Road
Nottingham

Dear Brother Roberts,

August 4th 1874

Presuming that you now believe Bro. Turney will not accept your challenge to discuss with you the whole question at issue between you, I herewith challenge you to discuss, for two nights, the whole scheme of Redemption as revealed in the Bible. The place of discussion to be the Temperance Hall, Birmingham, That a verbatim report to be taken by neutral parties, who will correct their own notes, for publication. The expenses to be equally borne by both sides. The time and manner of discussion I leave to your choice.

I am Yours Truly, William Ellis.

- - -

Robert Roberts to William Ellis:

Athenaeum Rooms
Temple Row
Birmingham

5th August 1874

I am in receipt of yours of yesterday, and beg to say in reply -- that on receipt of your original proposal, I decided in my own mind to agree with it for the sake of the opportunity it would give me of contributing to the enlightenment of those in Nottingham who, with yourself, have been misled. In your next communication, however -- by the very next, post, in fact -- you withdrew the permission to have the discussion at Nottingham. You thereby destroy the only inducement I could have to meet an incompetent man.

Robert Roberts.

18 Lamartine Terrace
St Ann’s Well Road
Nottingham

6th August 1874

Dear Brother Roberts,

I received yours this morning declining discussion with me on the ground of incompetence. I humbly beg your pardon for the presumption I have shown. Until now I gave you credit for willingness to enlighten any of the brethren, but now, on the most paltry pretext you wrap yourself within your Editorial conceit that such and only such may dare to discuss with you. You have forgotten that God has chosen the weak things to confound the mighty. Wishing a speedy deliverance from your present state of vanity and confusion, I am

Yours truly, William Ellis.

18 Lamartine Terrace
St Ann's Well Road
Nottingham

6th August 1874

Dear Bro. Turney,

I send you the enclosed for insertion in "The Lamp." It affords the best illustration of the insincerity of Bro. Roberts when he challenged you to a discussion with him. First, he hampered his proposal with conditions which he knew would be the cause of a refusal on your part; and again, when offered a very fair opportunity of attacking the truth contended for by you, for one night, and you to reply on another, he again plays the trick of opposing his absurd restrictions about the Socratic Method. He now refuses me as incompetent, with the kind remark that he would have accepted my challenge if I had not restricted it to Birmingham. In this he shews great anxiety for those misled here, but no charity for any at home or anywhere else. This disinterestedness reaches the sublime. The Editor, who, in his own estimation, is the only living embodiment of the truth in its integrity, would condescend to discuss with a weak opponent.

It seems not to have entered his thoughts that there are hundreds elsewhere who require enlightenment, and who would gladly listen to any enlightenment he has to offer, although he has spoken and written a vast amount for these seven years, containing more contradictory matter than on any question he has spoken or written upon. As Bro. R. cannot get a competent foeman worthy of his steel, I would suggest the propriety of his discussing with himself, as he is as much at variance with himself as he is with us. This is the infallible leader of the brethren, who was always right, and at the same time has been everything by turns but never twice the same, and whose present whereabouts on this question I have failed to discover,

I am Yours in Christ, William Ellis.

We publish this correspondence as an exhibition of cowardice and impudence. Robert Roberts declines to discuss with "an incompetent man" unless he can meet the said "incompetent man" at Nottingham, so that he may have an only one chance of enlightening the incompetent man's friends.

Does Robert Roberts not remember that he was once at Nottingham in the flesh, being questioned for a whole night by the brethren? Does he not know that his conduct only served to convince them of his incapacity to make his case good?

Has the said Robert Roberts forgotten that Bro. Glover asked him for a proof text that Jesus was under condemnation - knowing well 'that Adam's condemnation was meant, how he evaded the question by quoting the words - "When he (Judas) saw that he was condemned." Roberts will not meet William Ellis only at Nottingham; he offered, however, to do "the Socratic" with the Editor "either at Birmingham or Nottingham."

Robert pretends he cannot enlighten the Nottingham brethren except at Nottingham, but we could have promised a very large attendance of them at Birmingham. The real truth is that Robert is afraid of Bro. Ellis in the midst of his own folk, very much more than he is anxious to enlighten our Nottingham people. His objection to meet Ellis in Birmingham agrees with his repeated advice not to read the "Lamp." He dreads too much light. If he would meet some one else at Birmingham, why not William Ellis? The more incompetent the better for him. It requires, however, a great inducement for Robert Roberts to meet an incompetent man, and a greater still to meet one who is competent.

But may we humbly ask wherein William is incompetent as compared with Robert? Is Robert more learned? If we mistake not, William would give Robert a lesson in either Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, while we are sure Robert could do no such thing. Robert boasts of reading nothing but his Bible, and looks on libraries as shelves full of poison. William has read his Bible too, and something else to help him understand it. Robert erects himself, strokes his chest, and downward, blusters and barks, screams, and sometimes drops. William is calm, enquiring, patient.

Douglas Jerrold used to say - "Dogmatism was only puppyism grown old." Robert, we are sorry to see, is still determined to display this kind of "ism." Robert, as self-constituted "Protector of the Brethren," is pretty wary at protecting himself, even against incompetent men.

Many of the brethren have asked how it was he refused to attack us one night, and allow us to reply another night, seeing that we attacked him and he replied to us. They wonder Robert did not avail himself of this fine opportunity. Let them recollect he was after the "Socratic method." Well, but has not William accepted the Socratic form? True, but that form is not effective with an "incompetent man," except in a certain town, viz., Nottingham. Yes, yes, but did not Robert wish to use this form in Birmingham against somebody else? Ah! we see now it is all humbug on the part of Robert. It is not the truth he cares about so much as getting an advantage in argument, even over an "incompetent man." He laments our "havoc among the brethren," which we take to mean havoc with his position, and the smarting of his wounded spiritual pride, but more is in store for him unless he amends his ways.

Edward Turney.

Miscellanea

The above letters throw a revealing light on the man Robert Roberts. The writers of these letters knew him well and enable us to make an assessment of his temperament and of his methods. My grandfather knew Robert Roberts personally and fell out with him because of his arrogance. In his view Roberts was an excellent orator who could sway his audience with his eloquence but when it came to reasoning in the cold light of day he was lacking in logic. I suppose this lack of logic is what led him to try to do "a deal for sugar across the pond," as Brother A.L. Wilson expresses it, a little matter in which my grandfather being taken in, lost out. This episode must have been a salutary lesson for Robert Roberts and all who were involved with him. We cannot dictate to God what we shall do for Him and expect Him to be pleased to accept our work. The idea of raising a vast fortune in order to pay for all the Jews in the world to go back to Palestine (as it was then called) was an extraordinary plan and doomed to failure. Robert Roberts had little understanding of people to imagine they would want to go to Palestine, which to them was a foreign country. God had said He would send fishers to fish them out and hunters to hunt them out to force them back, not use a vast amount of "easy come by" money to entice them back. For one so astute (?) as Robert Roberts we wonder at his lack of understanding of the ways of God.

* * *

For nearly all of my 40 years with the Christadelphian community I was a Sunday School teacher and I believe this working with children kept me naive and ingenuous of the most shameful doctrines of the Christadelphian community. When I heard some of the silly things said, such as Jesus Christ having to die for Himself. I dismissed the speaker as a crackpot. Little did I know or care what was in the Statement of Faith. I taught what as in Scripture. It was as a result of insisting on answers from the Arranging Brethren to my questions concerning whether or not Jesus Christ had to die for Himself that I learned Christadelphians held perhaps the most far-reaching disgraceful teachings to be found in Christendom.

How differently Michael Ashton sees the Christadelphians! He has recently written a little booklet entitled "**The Danger of Culls.**" One objective of this booklet is to convince readers that the Christadelphians are not to be considered as a Cult Organization. However, there are some things in his booklet with which I cannot agree, for he writes:

"For over 150 years Christadelphians have been saying that Christendom in general has moved away dramatically from what the Bible Leaches. Their members are keen to discuss these differences and they regularly hold meetings where the teachings of the Bible can be discussed openly and without rancour... Christadelphians do not have a leader who sets the rules. The only head they recognize is the Lord Jesus Christ and their only authority is the Bible which they believe is the Word of God. ...prominent Christadelphians ...have always sought to serve others and have never been hungry for power or influence over their fellow believers."

It is of course true that Christendom has moved dramatically away from what the Bible teaches and indeed that happened nearly two thousand years ago. Today Christadelphians are part of Christendom and hold tenaciously to sin-in-the-flesh which derives from the Original Sin doctrine of the Mother Church. The Mother Church formed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in order not to defile Jesus Christ with sin-in-the-flesh but Christadelphians have no such qualms and have chosen to so defile Him. Neither teaching is right but of the two surely the Roman Catholic teaching is preferable.

As for Christadelphians **“keen to discuss these differences”** we find they are until they meet their match and then they avoid discussion and call it “controversy” or “disputing about words but not according to knowledge” or “having a form of words without knowledge” which are “unscriptural, mischievous and carnal” As for Bible teachings being **“discussed openly and without rancour”** Michael Ashton surely knows this is false and can only have hoped we would not bother to read his little booklet. Indeed we may not have done so but for a Christadelphian sending it to me to see what I thought of it.

“Christadelphians do not have a leader who sets the rules.” Perhaps there are no new rules today, but Robert Roberts made the foolish mistake over a hundred years ago of formulating rules which have resulted in battenning false doctrines onto Christadelphians, for ever stifling the possibility of spiritual progress and development beyond their Statement of Faith and as long as Christadelphians are willing to suffer it they will remain forever doctrinally stagnant. I was reprimanded once by a Christadelphian for saying that the Statement of Faith was formulated by Robert Roberts as in their view it was the result of an appointed committee set up for the purpose. Maybe it was, however, any such committee would have been appointed by Robert Roberts from amongst those closest to him whom he knew would go along with anything he said. Had anyone on the committee disagreed with him he would have most certainly been overruled. Ever since then Christadelphians have been a rule-bound society holding stubbornly to their long defeated theories.

“Their only authority is the Bible.” Even Michael Ashton cannot hide away from his own editorial of October 1998 in which he claimed the B.A.S.F. to be superior to the Holy Scriptures and to which every Christadelphian is supposedly bound to give allegiance, yet full well he knows that not all Christadelphian teaching is in accordance with Scripture. Even the simple matter of Doctrines to be rejected Nos. 15, 16 and 17 cannot be reconciled with Revelation 20:6; to which quotation Michael Ashton conveniently avoided any reference in his book “Studies in The Statement of Faith.” As for the expression “Sinful flesh” Michael Ashton has admitted that this is a bad translation (see letter below). Admitting to it is one thing but continuing to promote doctrines based on a false premise seems to be quite another to be quite another matter!

“Prominent Christadelphians have never been hungry for power or influence over their fellow believers.” How we wish this were true! What a joy! How often have we seen with our own eyes or heard of disgraceful and thoughtless behaviour of some, when there has been the opportunity to reflect Love, as Jesus Christ, would have us do, and they have shown “holier than thou” arrogance. We can all make mistakes when such opportunities are presented to us but these should never be deliberate in the pretext of upholding holiness or separateness yet offending people, whoever they may be. For example, the young brother newly baptized, who’s wife was not interested in coming to the meetings, was utterly distraught when he was told he should leave her. I believe this shows cult attitude of hardliners who also brainwash others into believing that because Christadelphians alone have the Truth there is nowhere for anyone to go if they leave them, thus exercising power and influence over them.

* * *

In contrast to the above, Brother Eric Cave has passed on to me two letters which he has received from a Christadelphian friend and from which I now quote in part:

“It is with sadness and amazement that I learn of your being disfellowshipped on the grounds of Clause 5. The phrase “...a sentence which defiled and became a physical law...” is quite contrary to the view which Brother Thomas expressed (and Robert Roberts agreed with) in 1869. In other words R.R. did a somersault. Indeed we find very few today who hold to R.R.’s idea and to most of us “a sentence which defiled”??? is

gobbledegook. The commonly held view among us seems to be that expressed in a Christadelphian Editorial, "There was no need of a miraculous change to bring about death; the man had merely to be left to the working of his animal nature" (March 1969),

It was of course, this change of ground by R.R. which paved The way for that disgraceful assault upon Brother Edward Turney.

R.R. looked on himself as the conscience and spokesman of the community. Nobody but he was capable of defining what we should believe. His insistence that his definitions of "inspiration" must be accepted caused the Suffolk Street division etc., etc. He may have done much good, but he certainly did much harm...

I would add as an afterthought that we all believe that Christ had the same flesh and blood nature (and consequent temptableness) as all mankind. Confusion came with R.R.'s view that temptableness is symptomatic of indwelling sin and that Christ, therefore had to have 'sins nature' in order to be like us. This raises the obvious question, did sin dwell in Adam before he actually sinned?

No wonder we have turned out to be such a contentious and divided brotherhood. All out of misguided loyalty to R.R.

Sincerely your bro. in Christ. X."

And from the second letter:

"Dear Brother Eric, Warmest greetings. My previous letter was posted just before your letter arrived... I got the impression that some of our well known brethren are only anxious to pour oil on troubled waters. Quite a few admissions were cautiously made. 'Peace at any price'! But it seems that your case is one that can't be 'put under the carpet' and so it may result in a situation where all the ecclesias will be picketed by the hardliners, as in the days of R.R. (who had the advantage of holding the keys of the Birmingham meeting).

If the trick question, (Substitutionary or Representative sacrifice?) is put to me I reply, "Christ died as a representative of human nature, but as a substitute for Adam, because He alone was not "in Adam." If He had been He could not have died "for us."

What weighs heavily against Clause 5 is, I think, the unleavened Passover bread. Leaven is of course an additive to the dough and not an intrinsic ingredient. It is strange therefore that the brotherhood in general is happier to use leavened bread as a symbol of the Lord's body, on the grounds that it makes Him to have been more "like us." Those who insist that He was "in Adam" are under obligation to answer, Why Son of God and why not a strengthened simple son of Adam? Don't they indeed hold the view (though they won't admit it) that Christ was strengthened by reason of having only 50% of our 'sinful flesh'? Incidentally, M. Ashton admits that "sinful flesh" is "a bad translation."

At the best the outcome of the stand you are making could bring about, with God's blessing, a more united and loving spirit among us, where Scripture is no longer used as a weapon to hurl at one another's heads. May God then strengthen you in your efforts on our behalf and may His grace and peace be with you.

Yours in Him our hope, X.

P.S. Please, by all means, use these thoughts to pass on, if at all useful."

* * *

It was pleasing to receive the letter from the Logos editor, Graeham Mansfield agreeing to discussion upon the Atonement in each others magazines. That was in May, after which Graeham Mansfield visited the U.K. and at the time of writing I am waiting to hear from him again. However, I have been sent a letter dated September 20th 1999 and signed by the Logos Committee as follows:-

LOGOS Facing A Crisis

To Our Readers

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Loving Greetings in the hope of Israel. During recent times challenges have been openly mounted against the traditional beliefs held within the Brotherhood concerning the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some are now teaching that the Lord did not offer for his own redemption, and that his sacrifice was only for actual transgressions.

Because Logos has objected to such divergent teaching, attempts are being made to silence the voice and spirit of this magazine, so that our firm commitment to upholding the sound doctrines of the Truth will be nullified. Of these matters we will treat in due course.

The sixty-six years of Logos work for the Brotherhood has not been without grave and severe trials, with strong pressures being brought to bear to challenge the continuing existence of the magazine. Brother H.P.Mansfield faced many serious situations, and we believe he was blessed with the necessary strength to continue his work in this respect. He consistently stood against the various "clean flesh" theories; opposed the concept of "perfect obedience;" and confronted other issues which, throughout his many years as editor, were presented to the Brotherhood as challenges to the sound doctrines of the Truth.

Under the good hand of our God we have been permitted to continue the work of the magazine in the last twelve years since his death, and with the Father's blessing will expend our efforts to continue this activity - hopefully, until we witness the Lord's return. We are living in the shadow of the Lord's coming. Of that there can be no doubt. Our policy and the doctrines have been upheld in accordance with the Word and the teachings of our pioneer brethren, have never changed-

Are we to capitulate the position we have consistently maintained, at this late hour?

On the contrary we earnestly seek the blessing of God that we might continue. Thus there is now a vital need for brethren and sisters of goodwill, who highly value the priceless heritage of the Truth which is ours, to support the labour in which we are engaged. Your subscription is an important means of supporting this work. We deeply value your encouragement and your prayers.

The whole Logos package is designed to strengthen the commitment and understanding of every reader, as we await the coming of our Lord. We continue to uphold the teachings presented by the former editor. Notwithstanding any claims to the contrary, the editorial policy maintains "apostolic doctrine and practice." Logos is very much involved in continuing the publication of the pioneer books of our community; of assisting in gospel proclamation activities and newspaper advertisements. Your support helps this work as well.

We ask you to consider thoughtfully and prayerfully our work for the Brotherhood and to willingly support it in the coming volume, God willing. Please feel free to correspond with us, in the spirit of Christ, on any issue of concern that you might have. Let us remember that we live under the very shadow of the Lord's return, and should be encouraging one another in the firm principles of the Truth in view of the signs of the times evident about us.

Your brethren in Christ Jesus,

Logos Committee, Box 220, Findon 5023, South Australia.

There is much in the above letter to which we could respond but we will not pre-empt any written discussion we sincerely hope will yet be published in our two publications. Suffice it to say that the best and only satisfactory way to face a crisis is head on, fair and square. We all wish to serve God and Jesus Christ in a well-pleasing manner and for my part I feel strongly that any challenge to one's beliefs should be publicised because thereby opportunity is given to examine anew one's conception of Bible teaching in company with others. It will draw men and women to a better understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and only good can come of it. We ask for a fair field and no favours.

So, dear Editor and Logos Committee do please let us correspond and at least agree to publish each others findings in our two magazines if only for the sake of clarifying the differences between us, though of course agreement would be much preferred.

* * *

In our C/L 177 for May/June this year we published a book review sent to us by Brother John Stephenson. The book by Philip Yancey is entitled "What's So Amazing About Grace?" In a recent letter to me John expressed his disappointment that no one has referred to it in any way. I share his disappointment for I feel Philip Yancey has found something of great value which needed to be expressed more openly. It isn't anything new but it, has long been overlooked in Christianity and as an exhortation it should help us in our daily lives to focus more clearly on the life and example of Jesus Christ.

Would anyone like to contribute a few lines of appreciation on this book, or on the subject of "Grace"? Please do write and share your thoughts.

Brother Russell Gregory.

The Nazarene Faith

AS FOUNDED UPON THE RECORDS OF MOSES, THE PROPHETS AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD.

1. We believe in One God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, who has revealed Himself and His purpose through His prophets inspired and moved by His Holy Spirit and recorded in the book we call The Bible.

2. We believe and accept, from Genesis that the first man Adam was created from the ground a living soul or natural body of life capable of decay and death like all the other species of animal creation which, like Adam, depended upon the breath of life (oxygen) to exist for an indefinite period.

Adam was not a babe but a mature, intelligent and responsible man made in the image and likeness of the Elohim but not of their incorruptible nature. Further responsibility was necessary for Adam in order that he might develop character worthy of continuance of life in the Garden of Eden where the Lord God had placed him. He was therefore prohibited from eating of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil; this applied also to Adam's wife Eve. "For in the day you eat thereof you will surely die," a plain enough statement to a man and wife already capable of natural decay and death by process. The statement "surely die" did not mean, nor involve a process, but a definite and legal sentence of inflicted death for breach of law and styled by the Apostle Paul as "Death by sin" for sin is transgression of Divine Law. See Romans 5:12-15 and 20-21-

Consider also the meaning of the statement "surely die" in Genesis 20:3, 6 and 7. Firstly on account of his action in taking Abraham's wife, Sarah, Abimelech was a dead man under God's judgment yet still naturally alive, so it, is obvious he was legally dead until he obeyed God by restoring Sarah to Abraham and accepting the prayer of Abraham for his misconduct. To fail to do this he was told "Know thou that thou

shall surely die, thou, and all that are thine.” There is a very close similarity between this case and the case of Adam and Eve which we will now consider seeing it has an important bearing on Salvation from the death that came by Adam’s sin, which was judicial.

Eve was first in the transgression then Adam, but regarding the means by which Eve was beguiled by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit is open to debate, yet it has a bearing on future conduct, of opposition to the will of God in the serpent being chosen in many cases as the personification of sinful thoughts and actions. For example, Cain, but most important “SIN” as having dominion as a Bondmaster over those sold to him as slaves. Thus by eating of the forbidden fruit Adam sold himself by becoming the servant of Sin and amenable to sin’s wages which is inflicted judicial death.

Like Abimelech in the sight and judgment of God and His Law, Adam was a dead man (and all in his loins). See Romans 5:12, also verse 15, “For if through the offence of one, many be dead,” This can only apply in a legal sense because Adam, and all in his loins, was still alive physically, so that in the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:23, all sinned (in the conclusion and judgement of God) yet being unborn. This may appear at first sight to be unjust until we take into account the following verse 24 and the previous verses 21 and 22. Also the same teaching in Galatians 3:21,22 and all having a bearing on how man became alienated from God and constituted as being under the “Law of sin and death” for a precise reason, this being that by one man’s righteousness and the giving of His life in the place of Adam and all constituted sinners in him, God might be just and the justifier of all that believe in Jesus, the Seed of the woman promised of God to bruise the sin-power in the head. See Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 2:9-18; 2 Timothy 1:8-10.

Paul says that Jesus abolished death, this cannot mean the death by natural causes, nor can we say “in Himself” as some do, for He indeed suffered inflicted death in order to abolish the death that came by sin and which passed upon all men as a legal sentence, removable through the death of Jesus, without dying naturally. The people who add the term “in Himself,” are also guilty of corrupting the Word of God by wresting His Word out of context, for example, Ezekiel 18, where the emphasis is on “death by sin” under the Law of Moses to those who despised it. Yet those who kept it died natural deaths. But the statement “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” is a reference to he who sins under the law and not to he who is obedient, for it is obvious that the obedient still die from natural causes.

It is therefore wrong to ignore the record in Genesis of man’s created nature by accepting it as fact in Ezekiel 18, that man is a living soul capable of death, and yet say without any proof in Genesis for support, that when Adam sinned he was before that occasion of a different nature to the soul mentioned in Ezekiel 18, by reason of this false theory being promulgated without evidence that Adam’s nature as a living soul (natural body of life) was changed by the Creator to cause him to die by a process of defilement and decay.

Readers may wonder why I have taken all this time on the matter of Sin and the Death-by-Sin in contrast with the death by decay as a result of creation. The facts must be faced that there is a difference to be seen between the two if a true knowledge and understanding is to be gained as to the reason for religion in the first place. This is why in the absence of greater detail in Genesis I have referred to Ezekiel 18 and also the Epistles of Paul who had these hidden mysteries revealed to him by Jesus Himself who is the centre and main object of God’s Eternal Purpose.

We can read in many parts of the Bible concerning God’s purpose in creating the earth and man. He created it not in vain. This is where Jesus, the Seed of the woman and Son of God entered into things.

3. GENESIS = THE BEGINNING. First that which is natural = Six days of Creation.

Man formed of the dust of the ground. Respiratory motion of lungs to cause breathing and life - and man became a living soul, or person, like all animal species but with higher intelligence and perception. Adam put under Law for further development of character to reciprocate his Creator in obedience to His will in the same manner as the Angels who were God’s ministering spirits doing His pleasure.

There were in the Garden of Eden trees whose fruit was for Adam’s sustenance, and two special trees - the Tree of Life and the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil; this latter under law of restraint by which, in the partaking of the fruit would in violation of the law of prohibition bring its violator under immediate legal sentence of inflicted death. It could mean nothing else seeing that if Adam ceased to eat of the food

that was provided for the sustenance of natural existence, he would have died in a very short time through what we call malnutrition. There would have been no need to alter or change his physical nature, which is concrete evidence that he was a living soul at creation capable of decay and death if unchanged to incorruptible nature like the Angels. Adam and Eve sinned by transgressing God's Law. It might well be said to them as to Abimelech "You are dead." They were in that "dead" position legally, not physically. They were already of a decaying and dying nature. If any refute this fact then the alternative is belief in a nature not taught in the Bible, other than corruptible and incorruptible. Make your choice, the Word of the Spirit of God or the words of men who change the Truth into a lie.

Concerning the latter it is a great pity that so many various religious denominations have come into being by such means and causing so much needless controversy. Jesus knew the difference between the death that came by sin and the death as a result of creation, or how could He have shown the difference in His reference to the Patriarchs and the dead father of the man to whom He said "Let the dead bury their dead but follow thou me"? Paul made reference to the first man as being of the earth, earthy and as we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, this being on condition of faith unto the end of our probation. First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual (1 Corinthians 15). Jesus, as a Rabbi from God, was addressing Jews whom He confirmed as possessing the same nature of Adam and Eve before and after transgression in the garden. The Jews therefore could put asunder a male and a female of that original nature through the medium of a bill of divorcement and tradition. But if as Clause V states in the B.A.S.F. of the Christadelphian community, our nature now and that of the Jews, is the result of a change to condemnation of the physical flesh making it defiled and full of sin and obnoxious to God, decaying and dying through Adam's sin and no longer "very good" as created, then it is obvious God did not, join such a nature together, male and female, in the Garden of Eden. Yet Jesus is speaking of the original nature of Adam and Eve, not any other impossible to find in the Biblical records as invented by men who lacked perception and understanding of the subject of Genesis and 1 Corinthians 15.

The lesson to learn from the Scriptures is not to confuse the Legal and Moral positions with the Physical, but rightly divide the Word of Truth. Let Jesus be true and let Paul be true and let those who teach otherwise be found liars.

4. We believe Adam lost by transgression his right as a Son of God by creation and needed redemption from the sin and death sentence under which he had brought himself, that is, judicially inflicted death in the day of his sin. We have shown that "surely die" means inflicted death by whatever method is used. But in Adam and Eve's case the method is shown to be by the shedding of blood if it is accepted that the coats of skins God used for their sin-covering were obtained by the shedding of the blood of an animal or animals - which in effect meant "life" taken in the place of "life" under pledge, or forfeit. That is what the law required and this was met in the typical animals slain and pointed to the Antitype foreordained of God, who would willingly meet the requirements of the Law of Sin and Death as it came to be known and revealed in the Scriptures. John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (Adamic). It was not a lamb in the literal sense that was slain on Calvary's tree but the man Christ Jesus, yet in Revelation 5:6-14; 6:1 and 14:1-4 He is described as a Lamb, but to show that there is no doubt about Adam and Eve's typical coverings for sin we have it stated plainly in Revelation 13:8 "And all whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, shall worship" the blasphemous beast. This explains Paul's statement that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin because the life forfeited to the law was human life, not animal and without the shedding of blood was no remission for Adam or his posterity.

In any case the sacrificial animal offerings were only provisional until the substance of their type or shadow came on the scene and was slain.

In the words of A.L.Wilson, one of our earlier writers, "God laid down the paper note in Eden but the golden sovereign on Calvary." Adam and Eve must have acknowledged this, together with their posterity, as seen in Abel's offering in contrast with that of Cain who showed no recognition or faith in God's redemptive Love, Mercy and Justice, but thought his own way and works would please God.

5. Nowhere in Genesis will one read that Adam broke God's 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." If this so-called sentence which

defiled and made men sinners in their physical nature then, according to Paul, by the obedience of one man Jesus, many could now be made righteous in their physical flesh whereas Sin and Righteousness pertain to the conscience and not to the physical flesh. See Romans 5:18,19.

From the foregoing we can see that God's mercy began in Eden though the justice of His Law had to be met and it was met in a voluntary manner in the person of His own Son not in the line of Adam, yet the Seed of the woman of the Seed of David according only to the flesh. We find no male genealogy of Jesus anywhere in Scripture, why should we if we believe He was the Son of God? Calling Himself the Son of man does not make Him a Son of Adam, but of Adam's nature. Make Him a Son of Adam and you put Him under the same alienated position that Adam was in after he sinned and therefore in no position to pay the debt of life lost by Adam.

We are thankful that Light has dawned for us in this way.

6. What then is our future and the purpose of explaining our belief and faith? It is that God made promises of everlasting life by inheritance of the promises in the Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ and all of that faith from Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When we come to Moses we find God has decided to restrict His covenant to a special people descendants of Abraham to whom He promised the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession and his seed when as yet he had no child. When Moses brought the people out of Egypt they were put under a Law of Separation from other nations and to observe certain commandments for life or death, the sign of circumcision was to show this fact of separation as a chosen people to God and that no alien of another nation could enter into covenant relationship with God without doing so through becoming an Israelite in belief, faith and circumcision.

From Israel's coming out of Egypt God was their supreme King and Moses their Mediator with Aaron as High Priest, in order that the Law given to Moses might remind them continually of the offence of Adam and the means by which God, in His mercy, had wrought redemption through One who was to come and by the shedding of His blood confirm all the promises of God from the beginning. God was their King, but they wanted a king they could see like all the other nations. See 1 Samuel 8:6; see also chapters 8,9,10 & 11 for more detail. Thus this Kingdom of God began to lose its moral power through lack of faith and God only over-ruled for the benefit of those faithful individuals who had respect for His law and commandments and suffered for their integrity nevertheless. The Epistle to Hebrews chapter 11 will give an example of such faith and integrity in the God of Abraham and the Father of Jesus. There were kings and priests then and there will be in the future when Jesus, God's anointed will be King over all the earth. See Luke 1:33-33; Psalm 2:6-8;

Zechariah 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:23-25; Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 9:5-7. However, there is much more to learn about the Kingdom of God than the surface value of these references, as we find in the words of Jesus in Luke 8:9,10 and from Luke 1:67-80; also Luke 2:25-32. We believe that the Kingdom of God will be established upon the earth and that those who qualify to inherit it will have been the subjects of Redemption through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and as it is an indestructible Kingdom which will last or stand for ever, flesh and blood or corruptible people cannot inherit it. This fact demands a resurrection of those who have qualified but have fallen asleep before the return of Him who is The Resurrection and The Life, and also a change of nature for those alive and remaining unto that return who also have qualified in the same way. See 1 Corinthians 15:49-57. The victory must be obtained first, through our Lord Jesus Christ. See also 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18. We of the Nazarene Faith know what is required of us to qualify for the Kingdom of God and salvation. Jesus said, "I am The Way (not A way), The Truth and The Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" All other ism's may protest but to no avail. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved, neither is there salvation in any other. (Acts 4:12).

The disciples of Jesus on one occasion asked Him. "Lord are there few that be saved?" But He did not give a direct answer of yes or no. He just put it to them to be sure themselves of being saved and not to concern themselves if other people failed to find The Way; "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able." Luke 13:23-30. This seems to be a parable directed at those who rejected Him as the Messiah even though He had shown them The Way to Life.

The record in Matthew 7:14-23 refers to the same type of people. These people were bidden by a certain king to the marriage of his son but they would not come, so he instructed his servants to go out into the highways and as many as they found bid them to the wedding. So they did so and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. This speaks of a mixture, bad and good, but it does not guarantee unconditional entry into the Kingdom of God. They were all bad and good when invited but they all had to be clothed with the wedding garment which was supplied before entry; their responsibility was to put it on. There was one there who had not on that garment, one who represented those who were bidden but were not prepared to accept the Messiah (The Garment of Righteousness) provided by the King, he was cast out into outer darkness. We must learn from this that superficial statements of belief that Jesus is Lord, do not make a person qualified for entry into the Kingdom.

There is much more can be learned about the Kingdom of God, and as Paul says. "It is not meat and drink..." - such as refraining from this or that - alcohol, no T.V., no Sunday newspapers and what have you, which is the modern trend. Let it suffice for the time being that we believe the Kingdom of God will be on the earth when Jesus will have subdued all enemies and will give up the Kingdom to God even the Father, and God will be all in all. See 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Daniel 7:13,14 and 7:27.

The question has been put "Why did God slay a lamb? Answer; "The natural life is in the blood, this is what Adam forfeited to the law, but a life unforfeited to law is what God offered in type and antitype, a lamb being the most meek and lowly of animals. See Leviticus 17:10,11.

There are many booklets we can recommend to the reader.

Brother Phil Parry.

"Ye shall seek me, and find me,
when ye shall search for me with all your heart,
and I will be found of you, saith the Lord."

Jeremiah 29:13,14.