

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 197

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EDITORIAL

Dear Friends, Loving Greetings

A little while ago it was mooted in the press that the bishops in the Church of England were contemplating reviving heresy trials for clergy who publicly questioned key Church teachings.

The first difficulty with that plan will be who will decide what the "key" Church teachings are and from where and from whom will these teachings be taken. The Bible should of course be the pre-eminent choice. But that seems a very unlikely prospect, if the Church's past record is anything to go by. Much of what the Bible teaches is exceedingly demanding, not to say inconvenient and difficult to conform to in these immoderate and unprincipled times. Someone said, I think it was G.K.Chesterton, that Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has just not been tried. That is certainly true of the established Church particularly in the last few years, when commandments and tenets have been abandoned or ignored in the name of tolerance and progress.

It has long been known that numerous clerics are dubious about the Bible based and historic creeds of the Church; a recent survey carried out by Christian research has disclosed just how widespread this scepticism is.

The poll revealed that a third of Church of England clergy doubt or disbelieve in the physical Resurrection of Jesus Christ and only half are convinced of the truth of the Virgin birth. What a disgraceful finding. The words of Paul evidently mean nothing to these clergy, "...and if Christ be not raised then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain... but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." What do these clergy think when they celebrate with their congregations the joy of Easter? Without true conviction those services become a travesty, an almost theatrical like event with the minister in the leading role. The liberal clergy represent about one in eight of the total and they confess themselves to be profoundly uncertain of the Bible's core doctrines. Clearly for such individuals it is just another job and has little or nothing to do with conviction or principle.

75% of the clergy questioned accepted the doctrine of the Trinity. This seems singularly perverse for the Trinity is a man made doctrine whereas the Virgin birth and the Resurrection are Biblical revelations.

This proves that ministers of the Church prefer to believe in their own unscriptural inventions than in what God reveals to them through His Word.

A Reverend Robbie Low, a member of Cost of Conscience, the traditionalist organization which commissioned the survey, said: “There are clearly two Churches operating in the Church of England; the believing Church and the disbelieving Church, and that is a scandal. Increasingly, positions of authority are being placed in the hands of people who believe less and less. It is an intolerable situation where the faithful are increasingly being led by the unfaithful.” A perceptive summing up which we could not have put better ourselves.

Another Reverend, Nicholas Henderson by name, said he was not surprised at the situation and the figures revealed, and remarked: “Clergy faced with intelligent and educated congregations had to think ‘very carefully’ about how to present complex doctrine credibly.” If it is true that congregations are more intelligent and educated that would seem to offer an ideal opportunity for educating them even more with expositions of sound Biblical doctrine thereby providing the flock with bread instead of stones. The difficulty is of course that this would necessitate the abandonment of various unscriptural dogmas such as the Trinity, immortal soulism and original sin and then embrace with a thankful and accepting heart that the Bible is the only source of true enlightenment. This should not be an impossible task involving as it does matters of life and death. But we know from our own bitter experience with Christadelphians that they too prefer man made doctrines and foolish tradition to the infallible word of God as revealed in the Bible. From my own observation I know that Christadelphians regard themselves as superior to every other religious sect in existence, because they are devout Bible students and yet they are in exactly the same position as the Church of England, all at sixes and sevens, simply because they won’t acknowledge past entrenched mistakes and errors in doctrine. They will not go back to basics and humbly confess that the Bible alone is the fount of all wisdom and that people like Robert Roberts, Augustine, a succession of managing brethren and magazine editors are emphatically not infallible. Church of England leaders are scripturally ignorant and in some cases, as we have seen from this survey, irreligious too, but their congregations are probably just ignorant. A classic case of the blind leading the blind. Whereas the Christadelphian movement is being led to some extent, if sources are correct and we have no reason to doubt them, by people who know that their dogged adherence to Robert Roberts fanatical views on sin-in-the-flesh are wrongheaded. Yet they refuse to ‘come clean’ in all senses of the word and re-evaluate their position in the face of correction. Rather than lose face and power they cling on to a fallacious doctrine and in doing so endanger the eternal future of themselves and those they profess to love and lead. Surely Jesus must still sorrow at the sheep He sees without a shepherd.

We commend each one to your merciful grace and your everlasting love, heavenly Father. Remember for good all those who love us, and those who care nothing for us and grant us your peace and serenity until our Lord’s return.

Love to all. Helen

Letter from Eric Cave dated 15th August 2002:

Dear Russell, A recent caller expressed the view that he had no problems with the B.A.S.F. despite having already disagreed with some of the clauses, so I thought it worthwhile to remind him of the relevant sections of that obnoxious document, to which we take exception.

Clause 5 asserts -

“that Adam broke this law (the he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil under pain of death in that day) 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.*”

Clause 8 asserts -

“That Jesus Christ was raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David wearing their condemned nature but obtained a title to resurrection by his death which abrogated the law of condemnation for himself and those who obey him.”

Clause 10 asserts -

that despite being “begotten of God... through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit Jesus... was during his natural life of like nature with mortal men... and a sufferer all the days of his flesh from the effects of Adam’s transgression, including the death passed on all men, which he shared by partaking of our physical nature.”

We have no hesitation in declaring that every one of the passages in the Christadelphian Statement of Faith that we have printed in italics constitute unscriptural and God dishonouring lies which demean the nature of the sinless Lamb of God.

Nowhere in scripture is there any teaching that Adam was adjudged unworthy of immortality.

Nowhere in scripture is there any intimation that the sentence defiled (befouled) the man.

Nowhere in scripture is there any proof that the sentence was transmitted to all Adam’s descendants.

Nowhere in scripture is there any proof that the line of Abraham and David possessed a condemned nature.

Nowhere in scripture is there any intimation that Jesus Christ was put to death for His own transgressions.

Nowhere in scripture is there any teaching that common natural death is the result of Adam’s transgression.

We appeal to all our Christadelphian friends to reject the above God dishonouring contentions of Robert Roberts deriving from the pagan doctrine of Original Sin which he embraced after the death of John Thomas.

Would a just God deny immortality to the man who ate of forbidden fruit that which He has offered to all men, including murderers and adulterers? The God who “would have all men be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4)? When Adam transgressed he alienated himself from God for “his servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey.” Adam became servant (bondslave) to “Sin,” Satan or devil, from whom he was purchased (redeemed) by the precious blood of Christ, as of a “lamb without blemish and without spot.” Nothing is said about his nature being defiled (befouled or unclean) otherwise his sin offering of a lamb would have been unacceptable even as the temporary covering it actually was.

The curse (Genesis 3:17) was on the ground, not on Adam, and lasted until Noah’s righteousness and Adam’s own death removed it (Genesis 8:21) “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living as I have done, while the earth remaineth seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

If there was any change in the nature of Adam, i.e. a ‘physical law,’ why is there no mention of it in scripture which only speaks of “terrestrial bodies” and “celestial bodies, the word “physical” does not appear in scripture?

The so-called “condemned line of Abraham and David” is a figment of the evil imagination of Robert Roberts. If there was any truth in it would both men have appeared in the list of righteous ones in Hebrews chapter 11? Would Jesus have spoken of Abraham being in the kingdom? Is it not time that the

Christadelphian "Establishment" ceased ignoring and trying to suppress all critics of their false Statement of Faith especially now that the straitest sect of Christadelphia, the Logos group, who for over 50 years have proudly proclaimed their closed minds, have recently split down the middle with the majority at last recognizing that Jesus Christ was not a sinner who needed to "display the just rewards of sinful flesh" by suffering on the cross.

Even the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses have had the courage to admit that they got their doctrine wrong. Have Christadelphians the same?

Eric Cave.

Following on from Eric Cave's letter above, and after recently re-reading Ernest Brady's booklets, "Outrage of Justice" and "A Christadelphian Lifts The Curse," I was struck yet again by the lack of logic in Robert Roberts arguments in insisting there were two curses upon Jesus Christ when in fact there were none. In opposing Edward Turney in 1873 Robert Roberts wrote in "The Slain Lamb":-

"Now if it was necessary that Jesus should come personally under the curse of the Law (of Moses) in his own person, in order that he might bear it away in his resurrection, and so open a way for the redemption of such under the Law as should accept his name, what about this other curse? Was not Jesus to bear away all curse? Surely no-one can say no. If it was necessary he should have the curse of Moses on him to bear it away, was it not necessary he should have that other curse - the hereditary curse of Adam on him also? Yes, beloved brethren and sisters, he did have it on him and he did bear it away."

We have frequently shown how unscriptural and unreasonable are the arguments for the supposed curse of sinful flesh, a curse which the violent death of Jesus on the cross was meant to show its just deserts - the ritual destruction of the body of human flesh; while it is some time since we made mention of the other curse of Robert Roberts imagination, the curse of the Law of Moses, This was supposed to be inflicted upon Jesus Christ when He hung upon the cross. The curious reasoning of Robert Roberts is based on making "Cursed is everyone who hangeth upon a tree" to be the curse of the Mosaic Law, which he claimed had to be removed by Jesus by His coming under it! It is said that by suffering Himself to be crucified He broke the Law of Moses and was therefore cursed by it and put to death in execution of the curse! Could anything be more ridiculous? Jesus Christ kept the Law of Moses without blemish and without spot; so how could He be guilty of breaking it? It is not possible to break a law by keeping it, and neither could Jesus' death have been the penalty for breaking the Law which He did not break! It beggars belief that anyone should think it needful to ask ones fellows and followers to accept such a silly doctrine!

I quote a paragraph from "Outrage On Justice," page 6, where Ernest Brady explains Robert Roberts argument as follows:-

"The whole argument is concentrated upon establishing its authors' conviction that Jesus came under two separate curses. As a man He came by birth under the curse incurred by Adam. As a Jew, He came by the manner of His death under the curse of the Mosaic Law. It was, so Robert Roberts asserted, the fact that these two curses converged on the head of Jesus - and this fact alone, which explains His sacrifice. He incurred the hereditary curse of Adam by inheritance from His mother of a nature defiled by sin, and He incurred the curse of the Law by His "innocent" transgression in suffering death by hanging on a tree. Although freely admitting that Jesus was personally sinless, the writer maintained that He must of necessity have been under these curses in order that He might die under them. It was this fact, that He was personally condemned by these two curses, which enabled Him, by His death to remove them for Himself first and therefore also for sinners. Thus, although personally righteous, these curses rested upon Him because of what He was, and together they made His death an inevitable and unavoidable fate. Divine justice required Him to submit to death before He could be said to be truly obedient to God and worthy of resurrection. This is in essence the argument in "The Slain Lamb.""

But why should anyone think it necessary to come under a curse in order to remove it? The curse of the Law was the penalty required of those who broke it; the penalty was a debt to be paid. Jesus did not break the Law, and therefore no penalty was required of Him, and there was no curse of the Law on Him.

What Jesus did was pay the debt owed by Adam when he broke the law in Eden. How Jesus did this was by taking Adam's penalty upon Himself, laying down His own life in the place of Adam, and for the sake of all in his loins. Thus, as descendants of Adam, we owe our lives to Him, and thus it is said that we "are bought with a price." Ernest Brady continued the above quotation from "Outrage On Justice" by saying:-

"Now, if the author was correct in his thesis, these are truths which will stand for all time. If they were true on that Friday in 1873, they are true to-day. There can be no ifs and buts - there is no room for qualification or modification; if Robert Roberts was correct, these affirmations are as valid now as they were then. If he was not correct, if they were not valid, then the whole of the doctrinal structure which is built upon them is unsound. And that means Christadelphianism itself, for the arguments in "The Slain Lamb" underlie the B.A.S.F., and are the very foundation principles of what is referred to as The Truth."

It is obvious to all in the Nazarene Fellowship that Robert Roberts formulated the Birmingham Statement of Faith in a way designed to keep out all who accepted the well reasoned exposition of the Atonement put forward by Edward Turney, and ever since 1873 there have been those who have goaded the Christadelphian "Establishment," hoping to remove their blindness; to awaken them to their responsibilities to search the Scriptures more diligently in order to preach The Truth.

And we know of many who remain within the Christadelphian community only by making private mental reservations or interpretations about the B.A.S.F. Either they pretend it doesn't matter what it says, and there is certainly a measure of truth in this approach because it is the doctrine of man, nevertheless they are supposed, as Christadelphians, to accept and believe all it contains; or else they try, by means of mental gymnastics to make it mean something quite different from what it says. Even some of the "Establishment" are guilty of this. While the died-in-the-wool Christadelphian demands, in his blindness, that the B.A.S.F. be accepted and submitted to in all its supposedly true, plain, literal and grammatical sense, and no one shall put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of any part. But confidence is not integrity.

Oh! How long will Christadelphians continue to use the B.A.S.F. to misguide and cheat the gullible? Jesus said of such, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9 & Mark 7:7).

Russell

MEDITATION

by the Rev. Dr. Denis Duncan

How glad we should be that Jesus was a Jew, for whatever else he brought from that particular religious background, his gift of the Old Testament scriptures is a continuing blessing. It is the extraordinary record of a people growing in their understanding of God. How penetrating is its understanding of the effects of sin and the magnitude of the divine grace!

Here is a people who, however different their circumstances and environment from ours, wrestled with the mystery of suffering, of providence and prayer, of temptation and repentance, of faith and forgiveness. Jesus drew on those scriptures in order to understand himself and his calling. He was buoyed up by the Spirit promised by prophets such as Joel long before his time. He was clear that it was his responsibility to

fulfil, in ways he considered to be God's will, the hopes and expectations of his forbears. As he made clear in the Sermon on the Mount, he came to "fulfil the law."

That lectionaries provide readings not only from the New Testament but also from the Old Testament when the Christian community gathers for worship, is a matter for thanksgiving. The compendium of grace that is the Old Testament has blessed us in ways too many to describe, but there are two particular parts which are of enormous value to those who, metaphorically, journey through the wilderness towards the promised land of right relationship with God who, on that pilgrimage, find it all too easy to be diverted to "far countries" and spiritual exile. Those two parts are the Psalms for their devotional inspiration and the prophets for their proclamation of righteousness, individual and social. Within the Psalms we find reflected our thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, sorrows and joys, desolation and ecstasy. Written in a distant age, the Psalms remain devotionally contemporary and relevant. How brilliantly the wonder of worship is expressed in psalms of celebration and joy with nature joining in the praise! How accurately they reflect our need for help as we, in our time, cry out from the depths.

When it comes to the prophets, we can only wish such men and (remembering Anna) women were the spokes-people of the church today. Guided by the Spirit, their insights were searching, their authority clear, their understanding of spiritual laws profound. It was in the last category that their true calling as prophets lay. They were not soothsayers foretelling the future in that magic way.

It was their understanding of the relationship of men and women to their God, individually or as a nation, that provided searing comments on their crises and catastrophes. Their constant themes were obedience to the divine will, the demands of a covenant relationship and, given repentance and contrition, the unconditional love of God.

Well could we do with such profound analyses of life and behaviour in, as Gerard Manley Hopkins described it, "a world which wears man's smudge." It does indeed.

Extract from the Telegraph dated Saturday, August 31st 2002.

In our last Circular Letter we published an unfinished letter written by Dr. Thomas just before his death, entitled "What is Flesh?" We are very grateful for the support of Christadelphian friends which has enabled us to publish the following:-

In "The Christadelphian" for August 1871, under the heading, "Extracts from recent letters of Dr. Thomas," Robert Roberts wrote:-

"While in the States, we obtained possession of several interesting communications from Dr. Thomas, penned shortly before his death. Presuming they will be interesting to all his friends (that is, all the readers of The Christadelphian, with few exceptions), we give them publicity here, though they were not intended for publication. As the most interesting, we give the first place to the conclusion of "What is Flesh?" This it will be remembered was the article on which the Dr. was engaged, and which he had not finished when death terminated his labours. So much as the Dr. had written for The Christadelphian, we published in the April number along with the account of his death.

During our sojourn in America, we were favoured with a sight of the letter from which that article was extracted and amplified, and here present a copy of it from the point at which the Dr. left off. Doubtless, had he lived, this would have been considerably enlarged for The Christadelphian. The letter was addressed to bro. S.W.Coffman of Adeline, Ogle Co., 111.

Next in importance is a letter to the same brother, containing the rudiments of the promised "key" to the forthcoming Pictorial Illustration of God Manifestation, which he never lived to write. The others speak for themselves.

1st letter:-

“Now Divine Power has made spirit out of the dust of the ground and called it Man. He has so made, or organised it that it may pass away. Here is a problem to be solved - what is the process by which dust is converted into spirit that passeth not away? When mere man-ites have expounded this, they will then be able, perhaps, to explain how flesh comes down from heaven, and is born of a woman in Judea. This is a knotty point for their genius to elucidate. It is not an imaginary supposition; but a testimony of God to be believed.

Jesus said to the Jews “I came down from heaven. I am the Bread of Life which cometh down from heaven, and the bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world; this is that bread which came down from heaven.” How did the flesh-born of Mary come down from heaven? This is the question for Mar-Christ-turionists, and mere-man witnesses to make so plain that he that runs may read, and say it is the truth. Till they can do this, they will highly adorn themselves by modesty confessing that they have not yet mastered the A B C of the doctrine of Christ. I have given them a clue to the solution in the above. Now let us see how they will work it out.”

2nd letter:- dated December 4th 1870.

“Dear Brother Coffman, Yours of the 9th... came safely to hand. My health is slowly improving; but my mental energies are still below par. This to me is an indication that the body still requires rest. I am glad to hear you are better. Our mortal bodies are frail, and under continual strain of nerve, brain or muscle; we will give way at last. The past must suffice for me and you in this state. We cannot always be young. With age, weakness will come...

Enclosed, I send you a sketch illustrative of the Great Mystery. It is in the rough. I have a more artistic drawing in my book.*(see note below). This I keep as a copy for the lithographer, if ever I may be able to publish it. It is thought by those who have seen it to be very beautiful, and to simplify the subject wonderfully. In the upper corner on the left, you will notice the letter *I*, surrounded by rays of light. See 1 Timothy 6; 16 for what is represented: Unapproachable light, in which dwells the *invisible I*. You will also notice that the lines all converge to a point, which is the mouth of the figure whose head is the word ‘Who,’ *the visible who*; the ‘I’ manifested in the ‘WHO.’ From the mouth of the “*Who I will be*,” all the lines diverge. Between the converging lines are the prophetic sayings of the invisible I; and between the diverging lines from the oral point of the visible Who, are the New Testament oracles concerning him. By comparing the utterances, it will be seen that it is the invisible I who is the speaker throughout. The invisible Who, the image of “the invisible God,” you will perceive is standing upon the earth, His future dominion, under which is the ancient monogram I.H.S., consisting of the initials of the sentence, *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, which signifies, Jesus, the Saviour of men. In my original, it has Moses addressing a company of Israelites, in the lower corner of the left, and pointing to the “I” and the “Who” as the practical illustration of Deuteronomy 6:4. In the lower corner of the right, is John the Baptist, pointing to the visible Who I will be, and declaring that “he was before Him.” At the feet of Who is a symbol of Who’s relation to Judah, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root and offspring of David. If you imagine the human figure removed, the convergence to, and divergence from, from a common centre, would be destroyed, and the utterances would all be confused and without consistent signification. The flesh is the focus of the invisible. I’s converging utterances and assumed power, as a veil for the purpose of condemning sin therein; after which, the same power (Ail) converts it into his own substance - spirit. Take away the *converging* power, indicated by the lines following upon the back of Who’s head, and you have an illustration of the *mere-manism* of the profane vain babblers of our time; blasphemers, who make a mere man affirm that he came down from heaven, and is the equal of God...

In to-day's *Herald* I see that Victor Emmanuel, king of Italy, has emancipated the Jews in Rome, putting them on an equality with all the other citizens, and permitting them to live in any part of the city, and to go where they please- I regard this as preliminary to Christ's proclamation, inviting them to evacuate the city altogether, preparatory to its final destruction. My removal to England is a problem unsolved. I am ready for anything the Lord wills. I would rather remove to the wilderness of Sinai, and meet Him there. I am, as it were, waiting the train, and you know in such an attitude, time hangs heavily on the hands. Thus it seems, though really it flies very fast...

Waiting and watching, I remain, yours, John Thomas-

* * *

Note: We reproduce the Pictorial Illustration on the next page in black and white and in a smaller size than the original, and on the page following we give all the quotations to be found in the Illustration.

It should be noted that the description given in the letter above (page 7), is with regard to a simplified version of the Illustration given on page 8. All the salient points are nevertheless, identifiable in the following quotations to be found in the -

Pictorial Illustration of Deity Manifested in the Flesh

“This is Life Eternal to Know Thee the Only True God & Jesus the Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

Quotations - top left-hand: -

“Times of the Prophetic Oracles”

Top left comer: -

“From everlasting to everlasting Thou art Ail.”

“Whom No man hath seen.”

“EHYEH. I WILL BE IS MY NAME.”

“Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.” (1 Timothy 6:16)

Between top left comer and central figure: -

“Before Me there was no Ail formed; neither shall be after Me.”

“I am Ehyeh your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.”

“The Son's name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty Ail, the Ever-lasting, Father, the Prince of Peace.”

“I am the first One and the last Ones.”

“I will be who I will be. I WILL BE, this is My Name for the Olahm and this is my memorial for generation of the race.”

“Ehyeh, Yahweh, Jehovah, or Yah, is a Man of War.”

“I am Ehyeh, that is My Name and My glory I will not give to another.”

“As I Live, the Whole Earth shall be full of my glory.”

“I am Ehyeh (or Jehovah) and there is none else: Besides Me there is no Saviour.”

Quotations - lower left, in banner:-

“Hear, O Israel, I Will Be our Mighty Ones is who will be.”

Below figure of Moses:-

“Moses proclamation rendered from the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4”

Quotations - above and surrounding central figure:-

“The Man My Fellow.” Zech. 13:7
“WHO I WILL BE.”
“Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root and Offspring of David.”
“The VEIL; that is to say, HIS FLESH.”
“The ELOHIM of the WHOLE EARTH he shall be called.”

Quotations - top right:-

“Days of the Ministry of John & Jesus Christ.”
“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and Ending. Who is, Who was and Who is to come, The Almighty.”
“I am the Bread that came down from heaven. As Moses lifted up the serpent, so must I be lifted up.”
“The Bread I give for the life of the world is My Flesh.”
“Before Abraham was, I am, I and my Father are One.”
“My words are spirit and life. The Deity is spirit.”
“He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”
“The Father is in me and I in Him- I proceeded and came forth from Him.”
“The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father.”
“We speak that we do know, and ye receive not our testimony.”
“I am the image of the invisible God, First born of every creature, by whom all things were created.”
“The Flesh profiteth nothing.”
“He will glorify Me with Himself, with the glory I had with Him before the world was.”
“I go to the Father, who is greater than I.”
“I was in the world and the world was made by Me, but it knew me not.”
“I am Ehyeh the Saviour (ie. Jesus) the Anointed King of Israel.”
“I will ascend where I was before, but I will come again, as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.”

Quotations - lower right, in banner:-

“Though born after, he was before me.”

Below figure of John the Baptist:-

“John. the Burning and Shining light.”

Below the Illustration: -

“Pictorial Illustration of Deity Manifested in the Flesh.”

To the left of the above wording, in very small print we read; “Designed by the late John Thomas M.D., West Hoboken, New Jersey, U.S., of whose many works this is the last,” And to the right we read: “and published by C.C.Walker, Office of “The Christadelphian,” Birmingham, England, 1901.

It seems fitting that we here reproduce an editorial written by our late Brother Ernest Brady in our Circular Letter for July in 1970 which has a bearing on the doctrine of God-manifestation:-

My dear brethren and sisters, Loving greetings in Jesus’ name. Some time ago someone (I believe it was Bro. Hold) kindly sent me a manuscript criticizing what I wrote in my booklet “The Truth about Clean Flesh” (now published under the title, “What God Hath Cleansed”) concerning what Christadelphians call “the doctrine of God-manifestation.” I stated that they believe that Jesus was a mixture of human and divine nature and I quoted from their literature various passages which appear to me to be clear evidence of this. I

went on to explain that if it were true that because he was the Son of God Jesus had a nature in any way different from ours He was not a real man at all and therefore He could not have experienced temptations like other men. We consider that the fact that Jesus was born to Mary as a normal child proves that physically He was the same as we are. The fact that He was conceived by a miracle only affected His relationship; He was the Son of God, not the Son of Joseph. Adam was a son of God; he did not receive his life from a human father but direct from God, but he was nevertheless a human being- In a different, though similar way, Jesus received His life direct from God and this gave Him a son's relationship to God but not divine nature.

This simple reasoning seems to have impressed my critic, since he has gone to some length to deny completely that Christadelphians believe in a dual nature.

It amazes me that anyone could have the audacity to deny a fact which all we who have been Christadelphians know to be true and which their own writers and speakers inevitably come to whenever they have to deal with the problem of how Jesus was able to live a sinless life when He had in His flesh the physical principle of sin. They can only explain that because He was the Son of God He had a divine side which enabled Him to overcome sin. Naturally they never very much like to be pinned down on the point, because they can see there is a serious flaw in their theory. It does not require a degree in law to see that if Jesus was born with a moral strength which no other man ever had, there was no great credit in His excellence. Conversely, if we inherit from Adam a moral depravity which makes it impossible for us to be good then there is no great blame due to us that we are bad. I have no doubt that my critic, like many Christadelphians, can see this and they don't like what they see, but unfortunately something prevents them from doing anything to correct the position. His defence is to write and chastise me anonymously. If he had signed his article or if I had any means of knowing who he is, I would have replied to him. But this is the last thing he wants. If he can snipe unseen, from behind a wall or strike in the dark and make off before being identified I suppose he feels he has accomplished something useful. Personally I feel like Jesus said, "He that is of the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be seen, whether they are good or evil."

He says, "it was not pioneer Christadelphians teaching that Christ's birth resulted in a person who was a mixture of human and divine nature." He charges me that I have "palmed-off" this falsehood from wrested extracts from Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts. This is a serious charge to make against anyone and if he had signed his name I should have wanted to ask him how he justified it. If I have played any tricks with Christadelphian writings it would have been a simple matter to expose me as a cheat and a deceiver and I am very sure that there are those who would have done it long ago had they been able, so I am not very worried about stupid insinuations unsupported by either evidence or reason. Let us see whether I have misquoted or whether my critic is twisting the facts. He quotes me quite correctly as follows:-

"It has been precisely stated by Dr. Thomas when he said (in Elpis Israel I believe from memory) "Jesus had two sides, the one Deity, the other man" and also by R. Roberts who said "he (Jesus) was flesh embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit."

These statements appear to me to define clearly a belief that Jesus was a dual nature or a mixture of human and divine. But my critic does not think so - he says "Both these statements are simple to understand (?) and are perfectly scriptural (?) but neither of them say that when in the flesh Christ was a mixture of human nature and divine nature." That is what he says but I am sure that anyone reading them without prejudice would think otherwise.

They are not simple to understand; they are not scriptural; and they do imply, if not in precise words, in effect, that Jesus was at the same time human and divine.

Apparently my critic takes exception to my describing the thought embodied in these statements of Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts as meaning that Christ was a "mixture" of human and divine. But if you say that Jesus had two sides, one Deity and the other man, how can this be true unless He was in some way a little of both? If the God-side of Him and the man-side of Him were not mixed together in one nature there must have been somewhere a dividing line between the one and the other. If this was so, where was the division? I will agree that put like this the question is absurd, but it is absurd because the statement upon which it is based, namely that Jesus had two sides, is absurd. It is the same kind of mystical non-sense as Trinitarians

use when they attempt to justify their belief that Jesus was the second person of a trinity God-head. If Dr. Thomas had said that Jesus was a man having a relationship to God because He was His Son in a very special sense this would have been correct. But he did not say this; he says Jesus had two sides. My critic tries to make out that the Christadelphian doctrine is not concerned with our Lord's physical nature, but this is where R. Roberts' evidence comes in. He declares categorically that "Jesus was flesh-embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit." How any honest person can possibly assert that this does not mean that Jesus was physically in some way different from all other men I cannot imagine.

As I have already indicated, it appears to me that this anonymous Christadelphian has realised the falseness of the teaching to which he is committed and is trying to make out that it is not what it has always been. We owe a lot to Dr. Thomas and I willingly admit that apart from his work neither we of the Nazarene Fellowship nor Christadelphians might exist at all as Christian believers but I do not think this justifies us in closing our eyes to the fact that he was fallible and when he made a mistake (as in this case) it could be a big one. He had undoubtedly a tremendous knowledge of the scriptures and a deep reverence for the things of the Spirit, but more than once in his work he built up a sound scriptural argument and then crowned it with a blunder left over from his earlier orthodoxy. This is what he did in regard both to original sin and to what he called God- manifestation, which was really a remnant of Trinitarianism.

Very remarkably, after denying my charge that Christadelphianism makes Jesus into a being neither a man nor God but a combination, goes on to quote Dr. Thomas in "Eureka," where he says:-

"In these testimonies it was revealed that Christ was to be the Son of Man and Son of Deity. How this could be otherwise than is related in the N.T. would be impossible to devise."

He is, of course, referring to the record of Mary's miraculous conception and the birth of Jesus, a man who was the Son of God and in this we are in full and complete agreement. But Dr. Thomas went further than scripture – he went beyond any of the facts or prophetic testimonies of either the old or the new testaments which he adduced or any of the reasoning which he had advanced, when he went on:-

"Was the product, therefore, not Deity?"

I answer emphatically NO, the product was not Deity. The product was a man. This is the clear teaching of scripture and anyone who says that He was God is denying a first principle of the truth. Dr. Thomas made a serious error here and Christadelphians have inherited it from him. It amounts to a denial that Jesus came in the flesh. It is no use Christadelphians denying their belief or arguing that Dr. Thomas did not mean what he said, because he continues in the same passage to ask a further rhetorical question to the same effect:-

"Did the union of spirit with flesh annihilate that spirit and leave only flesh?"

There is not a word in the record to suggest that in the birth of Jesus there was a union of spirit with flesh. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, as foretold by the Angel, causing her to conceive. Where is there any least justification for affirming that her child was therefore a union of spirit with flesh? And to ask if the flesh annihilated the spirit is a piece of rhetorical nonsense which has for about 150 years succeeded in preventing people from examining the lack of evidence or reasoning which it conceals. Dr. Thomas goes on again, with another question and this one he answers:-

"Was the holy thing born a mere son of Adam, or the fellow and equal of the Deity? The latter unquestionably."

I do not know what my Christadelphian critic makes of this but it is quite clear that Dr. Thomas believed that Jesus was a man with a mixture of divinity in Him.

Neither Dr. Thomas in his day, nor his followers today understand the issue or the explanation. It is not that Jesus was either (1) a mere son of Adam or (2) a divine man. He was not the son of Adam, merely or especially, but a man of the same flesh and blood as Adam and related to Adam through His mother. The

difference between Jesus and all other human beings is that His life came to Him, by the miracle related, direct from God. His life was not a bit of the Adamic life; He was a fresh creation of the same nature out of a mother who was a daughter of Adam. That is the vital element of truth which Dr. Thomas missed and which Christadelphians still lack. This is why they do not and cannot understand the Atonement or recognise and appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus when He gave Himself for us to redeem us to God. "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him... as a son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," Hebrews 3:1.6.

Our love and greetings to you all... your brother in the one hope,

Ernest Brady.

Regarding my letter to the Recorder of the Belfast (Balmoral) Ecclesia, reproduced in our last C.L., page 7, P Parry wrote to me the following:-

Dear Russell, Greetings in Jesus' Name. Thank you for the correspondence relating to the Christadelphian Belfast (Balmoral) Ecclesia. Of course they presume they have 'The Truth' but this is what the B.A.S.F. describes as 'The Truth' and as we know, is quite estranged from what Jude referred to as "The faith once delivered to the saints," and it has been proved in regard to some clauses that even Dr. Thomas (if he had been alive during the compilation of the said document) would have been in danger of excommunication from his own brethren under the name Christadelphian.

As you have pointed put in a courteous indirect manner, they are wrong in judging on the basis of a document of clauses they do not understand, seeing they are in many cases contrary to Scripture and also (I add) the result of a warped mind minus humility, (Robert Roberts).

Now I do not wish to be critical but I am not clear on what is meant in your statement and corroborated by Brian Bloomfield, "That we and the rest of mankind were and are responsible for the death of Jesus." This does not appear to harmonize with our teaching and our literature as per "the Federal Principle" which teaches that all mankind became the reason for the death of Jesus, but in the loins of Adam they could not have been responsible in putting Him to death. Yet I suppose on the other hand, being members of Adam's body, condemnation passed on all (as well as on Adam by his sin) by imputation and not in the active case.

I think this is what Paul means in Romans 3:9 and Galatians 3:22, so that we can understand his statement in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God..." This can be said of all in the loins of Adam, for had Adam been obedient continually, enough people would have been produced under obedience and faith to merit glorification in bodies incorruptible for eternal life, but sad to say, Adam's disobedience caused all to come short of the glory of God. But thanks be to God, a new man, Jesus, was able to restore the position to all by belief and faith in His Father and look forward to the time when Eden would again fulfil His great purpose with the earth and man.

Hope you understand my point re 'guilt' and 'responsible' under law and not under law, and imputation being for the purpose of a state or position of righteousness under Jesus.

Love and Kind Regards, P. Parry.

* * *

In response I wrote:

Dear Phil, Loving Greetings in Jesus' Name. During the past fourteen years I have had many occasions to be most grateful to you for your analysis of my various comments and here again I wish to thank you for your letter pointing out my too simplistic approach where I said, "that we and the rest of mankind were and are responsible for the death of Jesus."

Indeed, my claim was very brief and this could be a cause for misunderstanding. Perhaps I should have gone into more detail by saying that in a sense we sinners are responsible for the death of Jesus Christ for it was for sin that He died; but this is only part of the matter, for even if we were individually without sin, this would not mean we were without need of the redemption wrought by Jesus. This is because all descendants of Adam have sin imputed to them, i.e., they are concluded under sin at birth for the purpose of redemption. We must be born again, this time into Christ; we need baptism to bring us out of Adam and into Christ, in order that we may have His righteousness imputed to us in place of Adam's sin being imputed to us. This is the Federal Principle explained by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

In allowing Himself to be crucified, Jesus voluntarily chose to put Himself in the position where He could forgive all sin, specially of those who seek Him, and so "bring many sons to glory." He did this by purchase. Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came... to give his life a ransom for many." This ransom is the price Jesus paid to purchase all His friends ("Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you") back to God-

I wonder if Brian Bloomfield would have agreed with this explanation? Perhaps the Christadelphian understanding of the reason for baptism would have prevented him doing so.

My Love and Kind Regards, Russell.

We have now received a reply from the Recorder of Belfast (Balmoral) Ecclesia in reply to my letter of 15th July.

However, I do not wish to publish his reply. The reason for this is that I wrote to him as a fellow Christian, without disclosing the fact that I was no longer a Christadelphian, and he has written back as a Christadelphian. Suffice it to say that he welcomed my letter and my support. My support was not for his position as a defender of Christadelphian doctrine, but that he said there was the need for all Christadelphians to be God-fearing people, seeking and preaching the Truth. This would indeed be our prayer fulfilled.

Here is my reply:-

Dear Brian, Greetings in Jesus' Name. Thank you for your letter of July 24th.

Modern education should and does help us to understand some Scriptures which have previously been argued over, and Paul says we should study (make the effort) to show ourselves approved of God. You are right to quote, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." In this way we respect God's word and indeed God Himself, as you say. Sadly, I have seen all too little of this standard, more especially amongst those who set themselves to be leaders in the Christadelphian community.

But to some specific points: if Robert Roberts did not believe God murdered His own Son then it's a great pity he should say God did in Clause 12 of the BASF. He was a journalist by profession and could use words very effectively to convey his meaning, so why should he say one thing at one time and contradict it at another time, unless he had changed his mind? If Robert Roberts did not believe God murdered Jesus, then Clause 12 should be changed. How can you accept Clause 12 as it stands? One cannot have it both ways.

Over the years I have become increasingly aware of the contradictions, not only in the writings of both Dr. Thomas and of Robert Roberts, but of certain conflicts between the two pioneers. While I have great

respect for the approach to the Scriptures of Dr. Thomas, I do not have the same confidence in Robert Roberts. Indeed, regarding Robert Roberts, I feel there is good cause to question his flawed reasoning, or even his lack of knowledge, on several points.

It is now widely known in the brotherhood today that Jesus laid down His *psuche* life and not His *zoe* life on Calvary. This matter was never discussed by Robert Roberts and I doubt if he was aware of the difference between the two at the time the Statement of Faith was drawn up, for had he been I feel sure Clauses 9 and 10 of the BASF, and perhaps other Clauses also, would have been expressed differently. A reading through the gospel of John brings out the teaching in the Scriptures of these two words *psuche* and *zoe*, what a great pity the translators failed to make some distinction so that we could better understand the meaning of Jesus when He said such things as, "I lay down my life (*psuche*) for the sheep" (John 10:11), and, "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life (*zoe*) of the world." (John 6:51). It is very worthwhile taking ones concordance and looking up the 8 occurrences of *psuche* and the 36 occurrences of *zoe*, in John's gospel record to see how Jesus Himself meant these two words to be understood.

Again, the use of the terms "clean" and "unclean" in the Book of Job was not understood properly by Robert Roberts. Job and Elihu used two different words for "unclean" - one referred to legal defilement such as between clean and unclean meats and the other, to ceremonial defilement, which is of a temporary nature. Neither referred to literally defiled or sinful flesh.

To give but one example of where Robert Roberts contradicted Dr. Thomas, I refer to the very last article, entitled, "What is Flesh?" which Dr. Thomas was in the process of writing before he died, he said -

"Divine Power made spirit out of the dust of the ground, and called it man. He has so made or organised it, that if not further interfered with by His power, it may pass away. This is called flesh, or spirit that passeth away; and under ordinary conditions, cometh not again." (The Christadelphian - April 1871).

This was consistent with his teaching in July 1855 (Herald of the Kingdom):-

"Moses tells us that when the terrestrial system was completed on the sixth day, that God reviewed all that he had made and pronounced it 'very good.' But in what sense was it 'very good'? In an animal and physical sense; for it was a natural and animal system, not a spiritual one. Such a system is essentially one of waste and reproduction and was organised with reference to what God knew would come to pass."

Again, in "Eipis Israel," page 72:-

"The animal nature will sooner or later dissolve. It was not constituted so as to continue in life for ever independent of any further modification. We may admit, therefore, the corruptibility, and consequent mortality, of their nature, without saying that they were mortal. The inherent tendency of their nature to death would have been arrested."

Thus Dr. Thomas taught that natural ageing and death was from creation, not from the Fall. Yet two years after the death of Dr. Thomas, Robert Roberts taught the opposite! If the two pioneers disagreed where does that leave their followers? Are they not free to discuss among themselves which was right and which was wrong? I am all for discussion after good research has taken place. The investigation stage has not yet passed.

Again, I have never heard how Clause 24 can be reconciled with Revelation 20:6-15 Even the booklet, "Studies in the Statement of Faith" avoids any mention of Revelation 20:6 - "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power."

You will appreciate from the foregoing that we have the Scriptures to study for ourselves and, while we can learn much from the studies of others, we must not always depend on, or restrict ourselves to their understanding, especially where we can move on profitably. If we do not learn for ourselves we are likely to become moribund and I believe this is what we see in many ecclesias. It is also important that our writings

should be set out in straightforward language that a child can follow, not couched in ambiguous terms, or, in some cases, language which can only be described as gobbledegook,

Most important of all, is that while discussing these matters, we must never lose sight of love. God is love, and we must love God and our neighbours. The lesson of the Samaritan who helped the man who fell among thieves (Luke 10:30) must ever be our example.

Again, thank you for your letter. I hope what I have said encourages only discussion, not separation.

Sincerely yours in seeking truth,

Russell

Further to my letter above P. Parry also wrote to him in the first week of September as follows:

Dear Brian “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Ecclesias-”

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Recently I understood from a certain source that it is acknowledged within the Christadelphian community that liberal attitudes are increasingly undermining the beliefs and standards held and practiced by former generations of Christadelphians. Also that an appeal was made to all Ecclesias some years ago to awaken the Brotherhood to the dangers of doctrinal laxity.

About the year 1935 I became a Christadelphian by reason of the fact they claimed the Bible to be the basis of their doctrine but no B.A.S.F. was handed to me at the time, the reason for this I found out later when through studying the scriptures and rightly dividing them I began to question that, being taught that sin was transgression of law, how could anyone believe that it was a physical element pervading the flesh as though it had been injected by an hypodermic needle? In expressing this view at Bible Class I was warned that if I persisted in this line of thought in addition to a few more I was expressing such as the Holiness of Christ’s birth as stated by the Angel Gabriel, I was in danger of being disfellowshipped by violating the teaching contained in the B.A.S.F. but I was not upset by any threat of this kind when I knew my views were based on scripture and not other people’s false understanding written down as a contract. Such a contract as the B.A.S.F. was only introduced by one man in an attempt to tie people down to his views, yet the majority of the clauses I have found to be unscriptural and erroneous.

This is what I found to be the result of laxity in reading scripture closely and perceptively and comparing scripture with scripture. It is at this point the compiled clauses began their self-destruction.

Take for example Clause IV. Adam a living soul or natural body of life etc., placed under a law under which the continuance of his natural life was contingent on obedience. Agreed.

Example Clause V. That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality - ? Think. Is this what is understood by the words of Clause IV? No, it is a contradiction and supposition. Furthermore, the sentence for breaking that law was death in the day of transgression, not a defilement nor a physical law of his nature injected by the Creator, nor was the sentence a return to the ground but was a result of his life being spared by the love and grace of God foreseen in His own Son, the Lamb of God. Therefore Clause V accuses God of defiling Adam’s nature and making him capable of transmitting the same defilement to his posterity in a physical manner, which is contrary to the teaching of Jesus and of Paul by whom it is proved that the “death by sin” must be a legal imputation, not the common death experienced by man.

It is at this point that Clauses IX and X are at variance if the compiler believed natural death and return to the ground was the sentence upon Adam and all men including Jesus (as stated in Clause X). What death did the righteousness of God require? Was it not the inflicted death of Adam the sinner? Clause IX speaks of Jesus as one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God so is it not obvious that Jesus was not a sinner nor under condemnation in any way we care to put it? If Jesus suffered the death required by the righteousness of God then it is plain that Adam the sinner did not, though justly he should

have but was allowed to live out a span of life of 930 years the limit of his corruptible nature as created. Jesus suffered death by bloodshedding, Adam did not.

Is it doctrinal laxity that finds out these errors or the Spirit of God?

How in the name of reason can any reject the words of Jesus in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth my word by hearing and believing on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment); but is passed from death to life." Verse 25, "The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall bear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." Were not the people he said would hear His voice, in a dead state in the legal sense? How otherwise could Jesus say "Let the dead bury their dead"? The Apostle Paul was in the same position at one time, being under the law of sin and death, but what does he say in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Paul confirms this of himself in Romans 8:2, proving that the law of sin and death was not a physical state of decay and death. Paul's members had become members of Christ's body and no longer members of the old man Adam.

I will not labour my comments other than to refer to Clause VITI which speaks of a condemned line of Abraham and David which is said to be their physical nature. I thought Christadelphians believed that all people had condemned nature not just the line of Abraham and David. This shows Jesus as being an invisible spirit operating inside a condemned body of flesh and blood. Another violation of Clause IV.

Then we have Clause XII which depicts God using the Jews and Romans to slay His own Son because He was born with condemned nature of which Jesus had no choice, also by perfect obedience he obtains a title to resurrection before He has even died, so why did He need to die? To abrogate the law of condemnation for Himself? How can a man who is condemned, abrogate a law that condemns him? Does this conviction originally emanating from Birmingham express the faith once delivered?

Certainly good conduct in harmony with the pure doctrine of Jesus and His Apostles is necessary for development of character fitted for the future Kingdom of God, but a person must first be in Christ or in the One Faith which was once delivered to the saints, not a subject or slave to a statement of clauses full of deception, contradiction, and blasphemy which the B.A.S.F. is proved to be by the Spirit Word.

I have shown the very Clauses 5,8,9,10 & 12 to be out of harmony with the scriptures, which is quite obvious if number 25 of doctrines to be rejected must be observed, that is, "That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God." In rejecting this you also reject the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:12 to 16, also 1 Corinthians 12. Unless this is understood and accepted, then you are yet in the flesh, that is, not in Christ or in the Spirit. See Romans 8:8 to 10.

You acknowledge belonging to a house divided against itself of which Jesus said "it cannot stand," why then build on God's foundation with the aid of the B.A.S.F. wood, hay, stubble, which cannot withstand the fire of the Spirit?

I therefore implore all Christadelphians under the B.A.S.F. or otherwise to accept correction and instruction for their own good."

Sincerely, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Brother Phil Parry.

In our correspondence no mention was made that it was from the Nazarene Fellowship. In order to put this matter right, I wrote the following letter to him:-

Dear Brian, Greetings in Jesus' Name. I expect by now you will know I belong to the Nazarene Fellowship, I wrote to you initially as one endeavouring to follow in the paths of righteousness and peace. I am sure you believe this is so. For many years the Nazarene Fellowship has continued to enlighten those Christadelphians who will read our works for themselves rather than listen to rumours and misquoted reports of things we do not believe.

It is my earnest prayer that I may increase in knowledge, understanding and wisdom regarding the Word of God; I'm sure this has been your main concern also, yet we see things differently. I believe this is because too much reliance is placed upon the interpretations of others. Every so-called Christian denomination has some kind of set beliefs, creed or statement of faith. These are the cause of divisions because they are designed by men to keep away those of different understanding. Yet in spite of this all denominations seem to contain some measure of doctrine derived from Roman Catholic teachings. By way of example, a study of the beginnings of sinful flesh reveals a selfish belief, which started about the second or third century A.D., that man was not responsible for his terrible actions, but that matter itself was evil. This didn't have any Jewish or Christian background but arose amongst the Persians. Constantine took on board this teaching before he was converted to the Catholic faith in 386 A.D. and had enough influence as to persuade the Catholic Church to accept his version of it, which became known as the Doctrine of Original Sin. Sadly, Dr. Thomas seems to have been of two minds whether to accept his version of it or not, sometimes writing for it and other times writing against it, but Robert Roberts wrote it into the B.A.S.F. and now Christadelphians are stuck with it. I mention this as an instance of what I believe to be popular error.

During the past hundred years there has hardly a year passed without a booklet being produced by the Nazarene Fellowship and it seems to me that just about every verse in Scripture pertaining to the Atonement has been dealt with in a most thorough and consistent manner. Rather than labour this letter any longer I am enclosing one of our most widely circulated booklets throughout the Christadelphian community, "Too True to be New," which I would ask you to please read if you will, with an open mind and, if you should so wish, do please write and let me know what you think.

I could have wished our introduction to each other had been somewhat different but desire only to seek what is right and good in the sight of our Creator, to serve Him in spirit and in truth.

With fraternal love in the Lord, Russell.

Our grateful thanks to Eric Cave for the following article downloaded from the Internet:-

A critique of Christadelphian Teaching

by Matthew J. Slick of the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry.

Did Jesus have a sin Nature? No, Jesus did not have a sin nature. However, that has not stopped the Christadelphians from teaching He did- This is not surprising considering they deny the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Jesus. As with all non-Christian cults that deny the true doctrine of God, other doctrines necessarily become incorrect as well. In this case, their error is that Jesus has a sin nature.

One of the main verses they use to support their erroneous doctrine is Romans 8:3-4 which says, "For what they Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." They teach that the "likeness of sinful flesh" means that Jesus had a sinful nature. But it doesn't. The key to understanding this verse is the word "likeness." If this word were omitted then the text would say "...sending His own Son in sinful flesh..." If that is what the verse said then Christadelphians would have a valid argument. But the text says that Jesus came in the "likeness" of sinful flesh, not that He came in sinful flesh. In other words, men are sinners. Jesus appeared as a man. Therefore, Jesus appeared in the likeness of a sinner, though He was not a sinner.

Another verse they use is Hebrews 2:14 which says, "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." This verse can easily be explained in the same manner as Romans 8:3-4 above. Jesus partook of flesh and blood. But it does not here say that He had a sin nature.

To have a sin nature means that Jesus had a fallen, defiled, and unholy nature. I fail to see how an unholy person can offer a holy sacrifice sufficient to please an infinitely holy God. Of course, the

Christadelphians say this is possible because, even though Jesus had a sin nature, He never committed a sin and He kept the Law therefore satisfying God. But that still doesn't answer the objection. If Jesus had a sinful and unholy nature, how is it possible for Him to provide a sinless and holy sacrifice especially since Ephesians 2:3 states that we are by nature children of wrath? This means that the natural state of the fallen is judgment.

The problem with the Christadelphian position is that the Bible teaches us the sacrifice to God must be without blemish. Deuteronomy 17:1 says, "You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God." (See also Ezekiel 43:22-23.25; 45:18,23 for the same theme). Of course, Jesus is not an animal, but it is clear that the pattern for the sacrifice was that it have no defect at all. Why? Because God is holy and God doesn't accept imperfect sacrifices! To have a sinful nature is definitely to have a defect. Contrary to Christadelphian teaching, we can see from the Bible that Jesus has no defect, no blemish: "How much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). This verse states that Jesus is without blemish. How can He be without blemish if He has fallen and sinful nature?

For the Christadelphians to maintain that Jesus had a sinful nature is the same as saying that the offering He made had a defect. We can see that this is a problem because the High Priests of the Old Testament were fallen and had, themselves to be cleansed in order to offer the sacrifice to God. It wasn't simply that they were sinners. They were fallen by nature and were unholy.

Because the Christadelphians teach that Jesus had a fallen and sinful nature, their faith is in a defiled and imperfect sacrifice. It is, therefore, insufficient. They are lost.

What does it mean to have a sin nature? When we speak of the nature of something, we speak of its essence, character and quality. The essence of God, for example, is holiness, purity, sinlessness, etc. The essence of people, on the other hand, is sinful. In Mark 7:21-23, Jesus discloses to us the very nature of our hearts when He said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." This is why it says in Ephesians 2:3 that we are by nature children of the wrath; our hearts are sinful by nature which is the source of the sins listed by Jesus. This is also why Paul said in Romans 7:18 that nothing good dwelt in him, that is, in his flesh- Paul knew his nature was sinful and because it was he was lost and without hope (except for his faith in Jesus and His unblemished sacrifice).

Are we to conclude from Christadelphian thinking that Jesus' fallen, unholy, and sinful nature produced a pure and perfect sacrifice without defect? How is that possible? How is it possible for someone unholy to offer a holy sacrifice? How is it possible for someone that is sinful by nature, to offer a sinless sacrifice? Just because Jesus never sinned doesn't mean that He was perfect. If He had a sin nature, He was not perfect. He was flawed. His sacrifice would be useless.

However, to the Christadelphians, the issue is not so much Jesus' sinful and fallen nature, as it is His ability to keep the Law. Therefore, in Christadelphianism we have a man, Jesus, with a sinful nature being able to perfectly keep all God's law. Contrast this with Adam who was made sinless and yet was not able to keep the law of God. How can Jesus have a sinful and unholy nature and yet be sinless and holy as a perfect, unblemished sacrifice? He cannot. The Christadelphians are wrong.

Jesus was tempted. One of the reasons the Christadelphians believe Jesus had a sinful nature is their claim that in order for Jesus to be tempted. He had to have a sin nature. But this does not logically follow. Adam did not have a sinful nature and he was tempted successfully. He fell. Jesus did not have a sinful nature. He was tempted unsuccessfully. He did not fall. So, Jesus not having a sin nature does not mean He cannot be tempted.

Of course, the Christadelphians deny that Jesus is both God and man, even though this is what Colossians 2:9 says: "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." In their quest to support their view, they sometimes quote James 1:13 which states that God cannot be tempted by evil. They ask, if

Jesus is God, then how could He be tempted with evil? This is a fair question and, to be honest, a bit difficult to answer because the Scriptures do not explicitly explain it. Therefore, we have to work from what we do know using reason.

If Jesus' human nature existed by itself, apart from the divine nature, it would have been a normal human nature and capable of sin. But, Jesus' human nature is not separate from His divine nature which is morally pure and incapable of sin. It would then seem that Jesus was able to be tempted in His human nature but not in His divine. In the one person of Christ, there dwells two natures: God and man (Colossians 2:9). As God, Jesus could stand without the danger of sinning. As man, He could be tempted. Exactly how these two natures relate to each other in one person is not clarified in Scripture. But, as you can see, it is possible that Jesus be divine and be tempted at the same time because He was both God and man. To say that Jesus had to have a sin nature in order to be tempted is incorrect. Rather, in order to be tempted, Jesus had to be human.

Jesus was under the Law. Another Christadelphian argument that Jesus had a sin nature is that since Jesus was under the Law, and that a person is only under the Law if he is capable of sin, therefore Jesus had to have a sin nature. As I've already demonstrated above, Adam did not have a sin nature and he was tempted. But more important here, Adam was under the Law of God even though he had a sinless nature - though he was capable of sinning. God gave a Law to Adam when He said, "...from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17). The phrase "you shall not" should remind us of the Ten Commandments with the "you shall" and "you shall not's." Adam was under Law and because he broke that Law, he sinned. Romans 3:20 says, "...through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." And, "sin is not imputed when there is no law." (Romans 5:13).

The reason Jesus was under the Law was so that He could become a sacrifice for us and redeem those who are under the Law (Galatians 4:4). He had to be made like His brethren in order to satisfy the Law requirements of being a sacrifice. He had to be a man to atone for men. He had to be God in order to offer a sufficiently valuable atoning work.

Sin entered the world through Adam. There is a debate in the theological circles concerning whether or not the sinful nature is passed down through the father. The Scripture is not specific about this issue, so I present this argument as food for thought because it could shed some light on whether or not Jesus had a fallen nature.

Even though Eve was the first person to sin, sin entered the world through Adam and not through Eve. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world..." The theory is that Adam was the representative of mankind in the garden. When he fell, we fell because we were "in" him. This concept of representation, one person representing others is found on Hebrews 7:9-10: "And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedec met him."

Levi was a distant descendant of Abraham. Abraham was long dead when Levi was born. But the text says that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedec. How is this possible? It seems the answer lies in the idea that one person represented his descendants. This would explain why Levi is said to have paid tithes to Melchizedec because his distant father Abraham did so and because Levi was "in" the loins of his distant father Abraham. Likewise, sin entered the world through Adam and not Eve because Adam was the representative head of mankind. If this is so, then Jesus would not have received a sin nature from His father Joseph since Joseph had no biological paternity in relation to Jesus. Therefore, his sin nature would not have been passed down to Jesus. But since He had a human mother, He had human nature. We can see He was both God and man because He is called both the Son of God and the Son of man. If it is true, then we can see that Jesus had a divine nature received from God and a human nature, but not a sinful one, from His mother Mary.

Whether or not the preceding concept is legitimate is still up for debate. But I offer it as yet another possible reason why Jesus did not have a sinful nature.

Jesus is God in flesh. The primary biblical reason that Jesus does not have a sinful nature is because Jesus is both God and man in one person. Of course the Christadelphians do not accept this since they deny the Trinity. Nevertheless, their denial of the deity of Christ does not negate its truth. The Bible says that Jesus is God in flesh.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-2,14).

“But at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour.” (Titus 1:3).

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” (Colossians 2:9).

“But of the Son He says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever...” (Hebrews 1:8).

“looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus.” (Titus 2:13)

Note: All Scripture quotes are from the NASB.