

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 256

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Editorial

The power of healing which Jesus used was never an end in itself or He would have made healing His main purpose, finding and healing as many as He could wherever they were. However, He used His healing power as evidence of His authority and origin as the Son of God.

One of His most noteworthy miracles was performed about six months before His crucifixion. He had been in the Temple in Jerusalem where “they took up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” (John 8:59). A short while after, as Jesus was walking through the streets of Jerusalem He saw a man blind from birth and His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” It seems to have been the belief of some that it was possible to sin even in the womb before birth or that people sinned in a previous life and had to suffer for those sins in a new life, or else that children were sometimes punished for the sins of the parents. Jesus said that it was neither this man’s sin nor his parent’s sin that caused him to be born blind but it was so that God’s works should be revealed in him.

Jesus then spat on the ground and made paste with the saliva and spread the paste on the man’s eyes and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam.

The man born blind had no doubt heard of Jesus from his parents and friends but we are not told exactly when he realised it was Jesus talking with him neither did he see Jesus for he had first to go the pool of Siloam and wash before he was able to see. It seems that the friends and neighbours who knew him as the blind beggar could hardly believe their eyes and they asked one another if indeed this was the man who used to sit and beg, some saying, Yes, it is him while others doubted and said No, but it is like him. However, the man who had been blind insisted, “I am the man.” So then they asked, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made paste, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash’ and I went and washed and received my sight.” They still seemed doubtful and asked him, “Where is he?” but he did not know.

Perhaps it was some over zealous Jews who thought it best to take this man to the Pharisees and report the matter. After all, it was the Sabbath day and Jesus had offended the authorities before by healing on the Sabbath. We might expect this man to be at least a little intimidated. He had been a beggar all his life and thankful to other people for his livelihood and now to be brought before the ruling council should at least have been a daunting experience and the Pharisees were intent on being religious police making sure everyone observed the law; they were the power and authority in the Jewish community.

So then the Pharisees began asking this man how he had received his sight, he said to them, "He put paste on my eyes and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man Jesus is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such miracles?" And they were divided. They asked the man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." There was no doubt in this man's mind regarding who Jesus was.

This encounter with the Pharisees was nothing less than a judicial hearing. The authorities had already made it known that if anyone confessed that Jesus was the Messiah they would be put out of the synagogue. And the Pharisees did not believe that this man had been blind and had received his sight until they called his parents and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" These Pharisees were bullies and the parents were afraid of them and so their answer was cautious - "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." Understandably the parents did not want to be interrogated and that's why they said, "He is of age; ask him."

So they again called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." To which he boldly replied, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" Again he confidently answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they despised him, proudly saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will." Then he went on to tell them, "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." But they answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they cast him out! Disfellowshipping is not new!

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

Jesus explained, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

Some of the Pharisees nearby heard this and asked him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' therefore your sin remains." This may seem enigmatic at first but the Pharisees were condemning themselves in supposing they could see where the truth lay. If they worshipped God in spirit and in truth they would most certainly have accepted Jesus as His Son and rejoiced to see this man receive his sight. Well did Jesus call them hypocrites.

There are so many lessons for us in the events of this story and one of them is that the authority of the Jews in Jesus day is representative of the authority of hundreds of Christian denominations in the world today. But Jesus is not concerned with churches; He is concerned with individuals and to be cast out of a church for the right reason should bring us closer to Jesus and to God.

We see the man born blind standing tall with Jesus and saying "Lord, I believe."

May this man who was born blind be the example to us all.

With love in Jesus to all. Russell.

As a tribute to our Brother Phil Parry I looked through some of our literature from the past and came across this piece dated 1955 which I felt well worthwhile reproducing:

Misunderstood Passages

“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

(1 Corinthians 15:22).

The following is a response to an article by W.J.Livermore under the above heading: -

Having read the above I am certain W.J.Livermore, like all Christadelphians, has no qualifications to explain the Apostle’s meaning. In fact in his last paragraph he destroys his whole argument and like the late C.C.Walker, condemns to oblivion every person bearing the name Christadelphian under the Birmingham Statement of Faith constitution. This statement will be clarified as I proceed.

Mr. Livermore evidently does not understand what Paul means by “in Adam,” and “in Christ,” otherwise he would not mention such foolish ideas of being literally in Adam or literally in Christ. It is impossible to be in Adam in a literal sense, for Adam is non-existent, and to be of the same nature as Adam does not mean that man is “in Adam.” His misunderstanding is based on the fundamental error of all who believe Adam’s nature was changed after he sinned (without proof), and that natural death, according to the laws and constitution of God’s creation from the beginning, is the penalty for sin.

If, as W.J.Livermore suggests, Dr.Thomas was probably one of the greatest Bible students since the Apostles, why doesn’t he read and digest a little more of what he has written on the creation of Adam? or does he prefer, as the late Robert Roberts, to contradict the Dr’s words in “Elpis Israel” under the heading “Man in his Novitiate”? Dr. Thomas has written much which will not stand the test of Scripture and which he, if he were alive today, would renounce, in my opinion, after reading, for example, “The Sacrifice of Christ” by E. Turney; The Debate on “Why The Cross?” between E. Brady and F.J. Barling; “From Eden to Gethsemane” by A. Wilson, and many more.

But we give Dr Thomas credit and due respect for many of the truths he has expounded, realising that were he alive today entertaining the same, he would be excommunicated from those who hold to the Birmingham Constitution.

I would, therefore, counsel W.J.Livermore, to lay aside preconceived ideas and proceed to find the truth taught by the Apostle Paul in this passage and many such Scriptures, i.e. “Ye must be born again,” “ye are not in the flesh,” “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature,” “indeed, I truly say unto you, He who hears my word, and believes Him who sent me, has aeternal life, and comes not into Judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” (John 5:24). (Emphatic Diaglott). When does this take place? Surely when a person is enlightened and upon the obedience of faith passes out of Adam into Christ.

Our old man is crucified with Him that the body belonging to sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not be bondservants to Sin but servants to righteousness - to Christ - to God, being bought with a price from that Lord Sin, and become God’s servants – God’s property. Nothing is altered in the physical sense, but it is in the legal sense that there is an alteration and Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts agreed this in their writings.

How can we put off the old man and put on the new? Mr Livermore is quite prepared to explain the latter part of my question and his explanation obviously would be Baptism into Christ; but Baptism affects the whole question; for Baptism is burial of the Old Man and the rising is the New Creature in Newness of Life in Christ, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. But physically the flesh is unchanged and remains as God created it in the beginning. God did not condemn the flesh - He condemned sin; and I would have you know that flesh is not sin and sin is not flesh but sin is transgression of God’s law.

From the age of 17 years, I was taught this by a Christadelphian in my preliminary lessons, but have since been condemned by that Body for sticking to this truth and bitterly so by my tutor. Nevertheless, it is no one’s fault but their own if Christadelphians would rather blind their eyes to such discriminations in order

to stick to tradition and a Constitution which bars all progress in the Truth unto the fullness and stature of the man Christ Jesus.

If Mr. Livermore would only realise that it is all a matter of Law he would not make these mistakes, as so many Christadelphians do in respect of such unscriptural phrases as “sinful flesh,” “Sin-nature,” “condemned nature,” “sin-in-the-flesh.” The latter phrase was very much misunderstood by Dr. Thomas, as his words prove: “How could Jesus condemn sin in his flesh if it did not exist therein?” To answer this question Dr. Thomas, instead of reading the true sense into it by comparing other Scriptures, must invent a theory of his own by stating that “sin pervades every particle of the flesh,” thereby contradicting and making shipwreck of much of the truth he had already written and thus supporting the false teaching of Original Sin entertained by the Papal system, to which system he professed to be opposed.

It would surprise many Christadelphians to know that they have much in common with the false theories of the Roman Catholics and the Church of England.

It can be proved that many scriptures are wrested by Christadelphians. An example of this wresting is found in their theory of Isaiah 53:4-6. This theory is that Jesus took on our sinful-nature, and through dying abrogated the law of condemnation for Himself and all who should believe and obey Him (Clause 8 of the Constitution). “The miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabled him to bear our condemnation, and at the same time to be a sinless bearer thereof and, therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God” (clause 9). Contradiction upon contradiction and confusion worse confounded. If the condemnation was the physical flesh, then Christ did not destroy it or the condemnation; for Christadelphians believe and teach that He rose mortal and still unclean, and until God changed that mortality to immortality His condemnation was still upon Him. Thank God this is not the teaching of the prophets or the Holy apostles, otherwise we would all be yet in our sins.

Let us face facts. When did Christ become the sinless bearer of Adamic condemnation? What is Adamic condemnation? Adamic condemnation was due to his transgression of God’s Law. Therefore it was sin. The wages of sin is death. In Adam’s case it should have been inflicted death. But a substitute was provided in God’s Son who was foreshadowed first in Eden (Revelation 15:6); then from Eden linked to the Mosaic economy, thus including faithful men such as Abel, Seth, Enoch, the Patriarchs, and those who under the Law until the first advent of Christ.

How was such a death typified or foreshadowed? By the Law of Sacrifice, which was first introduced in Eden. The sinner, (not an unenlightened person - for by the Law is the knowledge of sin), brought the animal for his sin offering to the High Priest, and he laid his hand upon the head of the animal and confessed over it his sin; then the High Priest killed it and afterwards pronounced his forgiveness. In this manner the sin of the man was laid upon the animal, and the animal slain in his stead.

If Jesus were unclean, then the animals were not typical of Him. But truly in the words of Isaiah 53 “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” yes, the sin of the world (Adam’s sin) was laid on Him at His crucifixion, and that is how Jesus took it away. “He made him to be a sin offering for us, even He who knew no sin”. Yet another quotation wrested by Christadelphians to their own destruction.

Notice Clause 9:- “Jesus suffered the death required by the righteousness of God” (Inflicted Death). Did Adam die that kind of death? The answer is ‘No.’ Did sin-offerings die by natural causes? ‘No.’ Can you see it now? Or do you still maintain you have sin in your flesh? “If I had not come and spoken unto you, you had not had sin, but now you say you see therefore your sin remaineth.” How can you get rid of it? “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Be crucified with Christ and buried with Him by baptism, and rise with him a new creature bought with a price from Lord Sin to serve the Lord Christ.

In his earlier remarks W.J.Livermore rightly said that a person cannot be “in Adam” and “in Christ” at the same time; yet in his closing remarks he says that this is exactly the position of the faithful baptised. Thus Mr. Livermore confirms the words of the late C.C.Walker in the Christadelphian Magazine, November 1922, page 501, where he states: “it is a fallacy to believe that faithful baptised persons are not still ‘in Adam.’ Judas was in Adam; Jesus was in Adam, a fact which He confirmed on many occasions when describing himself as the Son of Adam.”

I often wonder how such men could have degenerated to the intelligence of a half-wit when writing or speaking on this subject; but such is the case with many Christadelphians. It is those who are in Christ and who are Christ's at his coming, that will be made alive, raised incorruptible - there is no process mentioned by Paul, neither can it be found in the Greek. This process idea was purely an invention of Dr. Thomas to bolster up his changed views (which originally were correct) of resurrection and judgment. Dr. Thomas said in "Elpis Israel":- "I believe in the resurrection of the faithful to Eternal Life at the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the unfaithful to Judgment a thousand years later." This view is still the true one. Jesus taught it, Paul taught it, David believed it, "I shall be satisfied when I wake with thy likeness." Psalm 17:15, 1 John 3:2-4). "But we know that when he appears we shall be like him and shall see him as he is." Paul could not see Christ as He is, when on the way to Damascus - the Light was too bright for eyes of flesh and blood but when Christ resurrects Paul, Paul will be like Him and capable of beholding Him as He is.

I must now rebuke Mr. Livermore for quoting Hebrews 2:14-17 as proof that Jesus was in Adam. There is nothing in the verses to convey such an idea. All the writer to the Hebrews is stressing is that Jesus was the same flesh and blood as Adam, and all his posterity - made of the seed of David (Mary) according to flesh (but not life), declared to be the Son of God as witnessed by John the Baptist. Son of Adam? Never. O ye Josephites. Show me the pedigree of Christ's sire, if you can, and where it goes back to Adam. Forgive the expression "Josephites" but that is your brand if you believe Jesus was the Son of Adam.

The truth is Christadelphians have written so much that if it were stacked tier upon tier it would make a high tower which could be rightly named "Babel."

W.J.Livermore failed to see that when a person is enlightened to the will and purpose of God in Christ, that person realises that he or she is "in Adam" and must avail themselves of the opportunity of being made free from the bondage of Sin to which Adam sold the race. Provision has already been made through Christ, and it remains only for the individual to die in symbol the death due to Adam (inflicted death), for Jesus has suffered this death, in the stead of Adam, willingly - the Just for the unjust - "He gave His life a ransom for many" - a thing He could not do if His life was already forfeit as Christadelphians would have us believe.

But Jesus was never in Adam, neither was He the son of Adam, although of the same nature and endowed with the same propensities to obey or disobey as Adam before transgression. Adam disobeyed with the very good nature; Jesus proved that it was possible to obey with the same nature, thus vindicating God's righteousness in passing sentence of death for sin.

This answers Dr. Thomas's question: "How could sin be condemned in the flesh of Jesus if it did not exist there?" Dr. Thomas, of course, has altered the wording and sense of Paul's words and through this misunderstanding made the unscriptural statement that "sin pervades every particle of the flesh." Any Greek scholar will substantiate that sin is an abstract noun and means transgression of law. Do not take refuge in Romans 7, for Paul there is recounting his position when possessed of the mind of the flesh, or in other words, as an un-regenerated Jew under the Law of Moses - object to this and you reject Romans chapters 5,6, and 8.

The idea Paul wished to convey was that Jesus came in the flesh and condemned sin by not succumbing to the unlawful desires of that flesh. This is what Paul means by Jesus condemning sin in the flesh; he does not say sin was in the flesh but that Jesus was in the flesh and condemned sin. Put it this way, if you like: "Jesus in the flesh condemned sin." Jesus therefore offered Himself as the sacrifice for the sin of the world (Adam's sin) but He did not sacrifice His character - that was an impossibility for He still has that character which is essential to His work as Judge, Priest and King in the behalf of His household, whose house are we if we have put off the old man and put on the new in the true sense.

Let us now sum up the matter. If you are in Adam you are not in Christ; if you are in Christ you are not in Adam. "For if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above... Risen? Where from? Why, the symbolic death due to sin which Jesus suffered in reality. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

Can you be a naturalised American and Englishman at one and the same time and partake of the rights and privileges under both constitutions? Obviously the answer is no. Dr. Thomas, in “Elpis Israel,” says, “No man can be in a federal head unless introduced into it. Quite true commonsense. If you are British and wish to become a naturalised citizen of America then you must renounce your British citizenship, and vice versa, it is a legal matter.

So it is in the case of the two Federal Heads, the two Sons of God. The first renounced his citizenship in preference for the Sin Constitution; enlightened persons realise they are also members or citizens of the sin constitution and are in the Federal Head Adam, they realise also that by a legal transaction they can renounce that citizenship to become members of another constitution in Christ the second Federal Head, and can thus say with the Apostle: “For our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus.”

In this transaction there is no change in the flesh as flesh, but there is definitely a change of ownership. In the former state, in Adam, it is Sin’s flesh or flesh belonging to Sin; in the second case it is a change of ownership and is flesh of God or God’s flesh, flesh belonging to God. The Apostle John in the Revelation could therefore write as instructed, “blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, yea saith the spirit that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.” Note: he does not say they die because of Adam’s sin but that they may rest from their labours. He also says that they die in the Lord, not in Adam. Most Christadelphians on their own admission, reckon they die in Adam. It is high time they decided what they are going to do about this passage from Revelation; so far they have rejected it, and condemned themselves to oblivion and made mockery of Baptism.

Study to shew yourselves approved, workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Misunderstood passages? Who are the offenders?

Brother Phil Parry.

At the same time as I was looking for the above article as a suitable tribute to our late Brother Phil Parry I came across this piece by Sister Helen Brady which she wrote many years ago which I have called

“Helen Brady and The Vicar” -

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

I belong to a Youth Fellowship connected with a Church, and recently a new Vicar had been installed. He has been coming to our Youth meetings and asking us to help him canvas the housing estates, springing up all around our homes, to ask the people to come to Church.

When discussing those ideas recently, it was not long before questions of Church doctrine were raised. I had asked why it was taught we had immortal souls that went to heaven when we died, when there is no Scriptural basis for this teaching. I explained as best I could that I believed, death was a sleep and the grave a resting place, and that being raised, if found worthy, by Christ at the resurrection would be our next and only conscious action.

The Vicar replied that he, too, believed in the second coming of Christ, but that he did not see what difference it made to our going to heaven, as the people who died between now and then had got to go somewhere. I asked why they could not just stay in the grave - he said if I wanted to believe that I stayed in the grave I could, and those that believed in heaven-going could believe that; in fact, whichever idea appealed to us and we believed so would it happen to us, and in any case it was immaterial as long as we were brought back from where ever we were when Christ appeared, again.

This all seemed very peculiar and muddled to me, but as he did not seem to mind where he was going, and I knew where I was, there did not seem much point in pursuing the subject.

Later in the evening the Vicar called Christ divine - so I asked him if he thought Christ was the same as us: he said, "no, certainly not" - He was God's Son and had special powers. I asked if he did not think we, too, could draw on those special powers if we prayed perfectly and sincerely? He replied that we could, but because we are only human we are incapable of perfection.

I then asked him, in what way Christ was different from us? He said, "He was God;" I said, if He was God, He must have been praying to Himself when He prayed that the cup might pass from Him in the garden of Gethsemane; he said then, He was only a part of God; but when I asked if he meant part of God in the same way that we are he did not answer. But he asked me if I thought I could really do no wrong, as Christ did; I said, yes - we all could if we tried hard enough. He wanted to know; then why somebody had not succeeded in doing that up to now? I replied, I thought some people had done - but how should we be sure; only God knows those sort of things. He said I was the first person he had met who said those things and that he wished me luck, but I should soon discover as I went through life that I could not help doing wrong, as it all started with original sin which he expected I knew nothing about. I rather surprised him by saying I did know a bit about it, but that I did not believe in it. He maintained whether I did or not, something happened in the garden of Eden to Adam which has altered us all. I asked where in the Bible such a thing is explained - he said it was not, but we were full of sin and that was the reason.

I asked him then if he thought the world was full of wicked people who could never be any better however hard they tried, with Christ as a pattern that could never be copied; he said that was about it; I then said it was a very odd and unfair situation - and everyone agreed with me.

He would not say any more, but told me that even if I shut myself away from everything and everybody I should, not be able to help evil thoughts coming into my mind - and that was the result of original sin; which I could not help however much I might try. I replied, if that was sin Christ was a sinner, too, as we are told He was tempted in all points as we are. In the wilderness the devil tempted Him to make the world His footstool, and turn the stones to bread - how else could those temptations be like ours if they were not evil thoughts?

He did not answer, as he thought no useful purpose could be served by arguing about these things, as none of them mattered anyway - it was all hair-splitting and pointless.

However, it served, one excellent purpose - to make me feel how real was the belief and the Truth I had been baptised into and what a clear and logical doctrine I had grasped: a doctrine with a truly wonderful message and theme, one that that I was able to match up with so little skill and knowledge to a qualified clergyman, a point of view and emerge so well.

It was my first real encounter of this sort; I hope I have set it down to interest you a little,

With Love to all, Helen Brady.

Continued from last C.L.

VERITAS AND HIS FRIENDS.

THE observations which Veritas had made impressed the three listeners in various degrees, and in a somewhat different manner. Mentor seemed to be in an unknown region, and though he did not express surprise, yet evidently felt it. Dubitas, though quite incredulous, was interested. Pietas seemed baffled, and in the very slightest degree impatient.

He was the first to speak, "You will excuse me for writing while you were talking, but I was making a pencil memorandum of the reasons why you regard the Scriptures as trustworthy. Allow me to run through it aloud, that I may be sure I am correct."

"First. I think you said the natural religious instinct, maintaining itself through an age of culture and refinement, proves that religion must be a fact, and that somewhere its truths must be discoverable.

"Second. That in the judgment of critical experts, no 'sacred' literature is so full of sublime reason as the Christian Scriptures.

"Third. That the divine movement among men, which these Scriptures reveal, can be compared and checked with acknowledged history.

"I am not quite sure I understand you," he continued, "on this last point; but do those notes express the substance of what you have said?"

"Yes," said Veritas, "they contain substantially what I have said, though needing the clothing of thought which form their natural habiliment."

"Very well," replied Pietas; "and now what was the first step in your departure from the old lines?"

"Well, I was never mentally satisfied with respect to many things that I was taught from my childhood, to accept as true, and being of an earnest and inquiring turn, I was led to re-examine the Scriptures as the only sources of information on the subject. For a long while I had been aware that much in the Scriptures received no interpretation at all; a good deal more was glossed over by human tradition and treated allegorically, and being aware of this I was very uneasy. I did not at first know the huge extent to which this was so; my eyes gradually opened to it."

"But where did your explorations begin?" inquired Pietas.

"I think I have already said," Veritas answered, "that it was the doctrine of endless sin and endless torment that I was first led to examine."

"But no one believes in that now-a-days," said Pietas. Here Dubitas and Veritas both spoke together, the former observing that the doctrine was taught in the Bible anyhow, and the latter saying that whether believed or not, it was still part of the creed of Christendom; it was still the rousing subject of the ignorant revivalist; and in the last few years philosophy, in the person of Joseph Cook, of Boston, had advanced to defend it. He added, "I don't profess to say whether anyone really does believe it, but I am sure I am incapable of believing it."

"But you believe the Bible?" Dubitas insisted.

"Yes, but the doctrine is not in the Bible, which knowledge was the first gracious result of my thorough searching of the pages of that book."

"I think I could show you that it is," said Dubitas, confidently; "I haven't many of the proofs at my fingers' Ends..."

"I can help you there," interrupted Veritas. "I have had occasion to refer to them so often, that they are as familiar to me as the alphabet."

"You seem pretty familiar with chapter and verse," said Pietas, smiling. "I don't think old Liber, the bookseller, would give much for that tattered Bible of yours."

"It isn't tattered; the edges are much worn, which must needs be, as I use it daily; but (turning to Dubitas) I can find any text you may rely upon as proof of your position. But before I do so, I think you will admit the justness of the remarks that in order to understand the Bible's teaching on a given subject, ALL the texts bearing on that subject should be examined."

"That would perhaps be a long business," said Dubitas, looking at the clock.

“It would,” answered Veritas; “and I am not going to ask you now to undertake it with me; I would rather give you just an example of what I mean.”

“Very well.”

“If you will refer, then, to 2 Peter 2:12, you will find it saying of the wicked, ‘ these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and DESTROYED . . . shall UTTERLY PERISH in their own corruption.’ If you turn again to Malachi 4:1, you will find it says ‘ behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh, shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them NEITHER ROOT NOR BRANCH.’

Gentlemen,” said Veritas, forcibly, “what is the full import of such words as are contained in these two passages?”

No one answered.

“I grant,” said Veritas, “there are passages which speak of ‘unquenchable fire’; ‘ the worm that dieth not;’ ‘ everlasting punishment’; and ‘ smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever’; but I hold that while it is possible to construe this second class of texts in harmony with the first class, you cannot reconcile root-and-branch destruction with endless conscious suffering.”

“As far as I am concerned,” said Pietas, “you have the argument without any opposition.”

“But for what reason?” quickly asked his friend.

“Is it not simply that your feeling recoils from the idea of endless suffering, which is so monstrous that a thousand bibles could not make you credit it? Would it not be better to look into the texts again to see if the hateful dogma has not been unwarrantably fastened upon them?”

Pietas looked uneasy and his eyes fell. Here Mentor came to the rescue by asking what was meant by the passage in Revelation 14:11, “and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.”

Veritas replied that during the age of ages, that is, the period of the King’s reign in the earth, they who are utterly contumacious and rebellious, will be taken and cast into the Gehenna of that age, the constant fires of which will be fed throughout the period with the fuel of base humanity. So that in a literal sense, the smoke of their torment will be constantly rising, throughout the age; not that each individual will suffer such prolonged pain, but that this Gehenna will be kept burning with its fresh consignments of human stubble.”

Dubitas had been looking into a bible at this passage, and said, “But that can hardly be, for the same verse goes on to say that ‘ they have no rest day nor night.’ “

“If you will notice the punctuation,” said Veritas, “you will see that ‘they’ is connected not with the first but the last part of the verse, and does not refer to the tormented, while tormented, but to the constant apprehension and dread of such as are exposed to this judgment.”

“What do you make of the phrase, the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched,” asked Mentor.

“The origin of the words guides us to their meaning,” Veritas replied. “That origin points to Gehenna, or the valley of the Son of Hinnom, where the refuse of the city of Jerusalem was received. Worms lived on this corruption, and fires were kept constantly burning to assist the decomposition. But instead of suggesting that in the ‘second death’ (of which Gehenna is made the type in the New Testament), men’s lives are preserved in prolonged suffering, its suggestions are just the reverse. The gnawing worm and burning fire teach us that in hell there is no life, but only the dead bodies of the wicked in a state of corruption and decomposition.”

(To be continued).

Life Through Christ Alone.

On the authority of Scripture, the penalty incurred by Adam was death by execution, and his redemption was imperative to the continuation of the human race. Had Sin been pardoned, and its guilt cancelled by the exercise of Sovereign will, or by an act of mere power, it might have been doubted whether the Almighty were indeed infinite in moral rectitude, or whether He would not, at some future time, re-impose the doom. But no such injurious apprehension can be entertained, He changes not.

The first man, having sinned, could not, according to God's Oath, have had any posterity, had not the penalty, or price of violated Law, been arrested by the Divine Promise; "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head."

God requires no extraneous motive to induce Him to pity: it is a question of "Law" and "Divine Love" in the Sinner's redemption. The Love of God began in the very Garden of Eden: He did not allow the execution of the Law to overtake Adam, and consequently "blot out" the human race. He provided a Ransom or Substitute for Adam (1 Peter 1:20; Job 3:16; Revelation 13:8; John 3:16).

Hence the slaying of Animals at once becomes significant. Thus the Sacrifice of Christ, though central in human history, had its effect (though obscure) as really upon preceding ages as it has its effect upon succeeding ages. He was fore-ordained by the God of Love to be the "Human Ransom," (Matthew 20:28) by which alone man was spared his natural existence and is invited to return to the "Loving Father" and live triumphantly in the untold ages beyond.

"I thank Thee, Father, Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." No Son of God, i.e. Son by birth, as was Jesus, can possibly come under condemnation, unless He individually sin. Jesus was the Christ, the "Son" of the Living God. Jesus did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth. Therefore Jesus was free from condemnation.

No adopted Son of God can be under condemnation if he walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, because the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the Law of sin and Death.

"The Soul that sinneth shall die." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Could the shed blood of the sinner redeem himself? Could you point out from Scripture where it says Yes? "What then, shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange (*en antallagna*) for his life?"

A.L.Wilson.

A Few Thoughts Regarding "Free Life"

When we talk of Jesus Christ having a Free Life we mean He was free from the condemnation which came into the world by Adam's transgression, which condemnation passed upon all Adam's posterity. As Paul tells us, "the scripture hath concluded all under sin." (Galatians 3:22).

Adam was created and his Brother Jesus Christ was begotten by their Father, both with a life free from condemnation. It is commonly accepted that Adam's life was not under condemnation until he transgressed but with regard to Jesus' life we say the true reason for the Virgin Birth was to give Him a life free of condemnation also.

To be on probation for eternal life Adam had to be under law. Law gives choice. Adam lost his birthright when he made the wrong choice and ate of the forbidden tree. This necessitated the birth of Jesus Christ who kept His birthright safely.

Now let us for a moment consider Moses as a type of Christ. We will note many parallels but notice specially Moses "free life."

Around the time of Moses birth other male infants were slain by order of the authorities to prevent an uprising against their own interests.

Moses was born into a family in bondage to Egyptian slavery. In his early days he was nourished by his mother who was in bondage, but he was brought up free of this bondage in the king's palace and educated and trained for a position in the royal household. Moses never forsook his kinsmen to pursue his interests in the royal household. Indeed he believed that his own people would see him as their champion when he slew the Egyptian. But that was not God's way any more than it would have been for Jesus Christ to have thrown Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple in order to persuaded the people to follow Him because of His great power and authority.

In due time God worked miracles by Moses - even Pharaoh had to accept that Moses was the leader of Israel.

Moses led the people out of bondage and gave them a law from God. Obedience to the law would bring great reward while disobedience would bring dire consequences. He led the people throughout the wilderness years until reaching the land of Promise.

In all these things we see Moses as a type of Christ but the point to notice in our present context is that God chose a free man for the purpose. Why? What was the reason for this when God could have raised up any one to lead His people out of bondage. We say, not so, because everyone else in Israel was in bondage. They were slaves to the Egyptians just as Adam and his descendants were slaves to Sin. No one in bondage would have fulfilled the type except for Moses who had been made free through Divine providence; God raised up a "free" Moses for His purpose of leading His people Israel out of bondage. Even as He chose a "free" Christ to lead His people out of the bondage to Sin.

These facts we deduce from Scripture and find no Scripture contrary to them.

Robert Roberts view of "Free Life."

But Robert Roberts says that "Free Life is a myth." Here are his words quoted from "The Slain Lamb;" - early on in his lecture he says:-

"I will tonight, place the theory of the truth side by side with the theory of this error, and I will explain the theory of the truth in the language of the Spirit; and I will shew wherein the language of the Spirit is destructive of the language - the artificial and carnal language - which this Renunciationist heresy is incessantly compelled to employ in defining its principles."

Later, not yet having "placed the theory of the truth side by side with the theory of this error," he says,

"in order that you may see that Jesus, in the days of His flesh, inherited and experienced all the results and feelings that have come by Adam's transgression: from which I will argue and prove otherwise my argument, that this inheritance extended to mortality itself, and that "free life," so called, is a myth... I wish to establish, link by link, all my evidence, as I will undertake to destroy, link by link, the whole chain of sophistry by the which the minds of the brethren are being bewitched and turned aside from the truth."

Again, further on, while we are still waiting for him to "establish link by link all my evidence," he says,

"I will shew you before I am done, that He had not a free life, but bore our condemnation in his own person, as much as any of us, necessitating His death before He could be purified from the curse. This free life is a thing you do not read of in the Scriptures; it is a mere invention; a plausible thing, but a gratuitous thing; an unproved assumption which

is made the starting point of the train of reasoning by which it is attempted to establish this heresy.”

And yet again, now nearly half way through his lecture, not yet having shown us and before he has made anything manifest, he says,

“I will endeavour to make manifest the most unscriptural, the most carnal, and the most untrue and mischievous character of the new philosophy, with which it is now attempted to inoculate the brethren on the subject of “the flesh”.

And so eventually and at last after an arduous period of preparation we come to the time when Robert Roberts is about to place before us “the theory of the truth in the language of the Spirit” and “prove that free life, so called, is a myth” and “to establish link by link” all his evidence to “shew Jesus had not a free life,” and we anticipate the deliverance of some awesome argument with great expectation and now ‘the time of birth’ has arrived - and what do we find? - we witness a still-born argument, useless and lifeless as could be, for his conclusion is this: ~

“Well, if there had been a Jew who had kept the law in all things, having done the will of the Father from the very beginning of life to the end of his life, he would have been in the very position of the Lord Jesus Himself; it would then have been in his power, by dying, to cleanse himself from the Adamic condemnation, and his righteousness would have caused his resurrection from the dead. It is by the righteousness of one that resurrection has come (Romans 5:18, 1 Corinthians 15:21); it is not by the “free life” of one. “Free Life” is a myth; and invention of the new heresy...”

This is the concept of a novice, not having properly considered his subject. We should surely expect better from one of the Founding Fathers and a Pioneer of the Christadelphian Denomination. Where is his appeal to Scripture to support his views, let alone unassailable proof of them? His references to both Romans 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:21 are misused. Not once has he attempted to “establish” anything “link by link”. All his talk has been useless and pointless.

The previous evening Edward Turney, in his lecture “The Sacrifice of Christ,” had said “Now brethren, there are two things required of the last Adam; one was that He should run His probation after a perfect manner; the other that He should lay down His life for us. I am utterly unable to see how He could lay down a life He did not possess. If His is lost or forfeit as ours is at birth He did not possess it free, and as His natural life was the price to be paid He had in that case nothing to pay with.”

We consider this subject is of the greatest importance to every disciple because, as Ernest Brady explained in his booklet “The Great Mystery of the Christian Religion,” “Those who have sought to explain His (Christ’s) death as a vicarious punishment or as the destruction of a sinful nature have done both Him and His Father a grievous wrong. Him because if His death was in any sense necessary for His own deliverance it could not have been a sacrifice on behalf of others, and God because it would be totally unjust to punish the innocent in order that the guilty might go free.”

Brother Russell Gregory.

Letter from Australia:

In response to our last Circular Letter I received a letter from Australia in which the writer quoted from my editorial where I wrote, “One has only to visit the many Christadelphian forums . . . Almost anything goes, and there is a diminishing distinction between Christadelphians and some other denominations.” He asks, “Would you please elaborate further as I wonder whether there could be a falling away from the apostolic truth. The words of Luke 18:8, “nevertheless when the Son of man comes shall he find faith on the earth?”

Having sifted through hundreds of posts I have chosen the following in answer to this reader's request, but perhaps not much of this can be considered a falling away; rather I believe it is highlighting the many shortcomings which have plagued Christadelphia since Robert Roberts formulated the BASF. His notion that "We have passed the investigation stage" has long since been shown silly by thinking brethren and sisters, yet the Statement of Faith is still considered equal to the Bible in authority!

Many hundreds of Christadelphians have been disfellowshipped for suggesting there should be more discussion on questionable doctrines only to be turned out of their midst and some of these people joined the Nazarene Fellowship which gave them a voice to thousands within Christadelphia.

Since the introduction of the Internet we have seen greater changes than ever and the following extracts from the Christadelphian Worldwide Forum will show.

I have removed all names from these posts and as the forum can be read by anyone in the world with a computer I hope no one feels upset by finding their posts here.

Let's start with a Christadelphian who writes, "This site should be called 'Anti-Christadelphians Worldwide'"

The responses came thick and fast. Nearly two hundred in the first week! Here are just a few: -

1). Have you read anything on here that is not true. Nobody is forcing you to read or post here. Most comments are from people who are still Christadelphians, but have maybe realized, or grown further in their faith, and merely want to share the very valuable lessons they have learnt that have taken them beyond the 'allowed' system of belief that you still have. That is not to be 'anti', but to encourage and grow people. Depends whether you read with 'critical, judgmental eyes', or a heart of freedom ready to learn. It's all relative. Don't try and find fault, find new ideas and grow a little - - Do you honestly think we don't all want to be the VERY best we can growing deeper into God every day? This site isn't here to encourage hostility. I think if you want a site like that you should set up your own one. This site does allow wide discussion though and includes many at the edges of Christadelphia and perhaps that's your issue. You would prefer to have discussions limited and not have anyone questioning traditions. The reality is a high number of Christadelphians do want wider discussions and that can be shown from the fact that a high percentage of group members here are Christadelphians...

2). I am a Christian and because I agree with the Christadelphian viewpoint on scripture, I worship at a Christadelphian church. I have read about a lot of pain ... caused by so called 'Godly men and women' all in the name of 'conformity'... we are however NOT clones of each other! ... and as for freedom of thought and speech on here, I welcome it! If we don't start thinking for ourselves and allow God to work in us then how are we ever going to grow in Him??!!

3). To live is to grow. There is not a living thing that does not grow each day. If we are truly alive physically then we eat food to grow our physical bodies. If we are to be alive spiritually, then we 'grow' our spiritual mind in conversation with our Master, with listening to His teachings, with prayer, praise and thanksgiving, with reading from His message to us... God is our Father, of you, me and everybody else on here, and it is He who wills that none of us should perish. He doesn't need you or me to do it.

4). In my spiritual journey, I sought to belong somewhere. I went into Jehovah's Witnesses as a teen, because they came to me, they taught me, they wanted me. But I outgrew them... they couldn't answer my questions beyond a certain point, so I left. I found Christadelphians. They taught me and I thought I was done looking, but eventually realized that I wasn't. I was still growing. I outgrew the Christadelphians. That was harder... much like a teenager, wanting to stretch my wings, but getting stuffed back into this family unit that didn't want me to change or think

differently. Like all teens, eventually you realize the only way to finish growing up is to leave the nest... who is my mother or my family? Even Christ realized the limitations of being boxed into a unit defined a certain way. God can't be put into a box and defined, nor can our worship of Him.

Religion has to have that growing room, or people will leave. It can't be all defined and inflexible because there is no freedom in that... But there is absolutely no room, in many ecclesias, for spiritual growth that is not defined on a paper...the BASF. Just like a family unit, it has to be that way, or the highway...and the "teen" has two choices...stay and be stifled, or go and grow. Christadelphia, as a religion, really needs to look at what people on this forum have been saying. No one can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

The original poster then wrote:

5). I am just going with all the posts. Most of them are complaints and criticisms, how about some positive posts about our faith, such as what an uplifting exhort we had to day, and an expression of brotherly love. Also I notice that a great number of posters are ex-Christadelphians.

6). If your opening post isn't a 'complaint and a criticism' then I don't know what is... Also, why does it matter to you that 'a great number of posters are ex Christadelphians?'...brotherly love....hmmmm,

7). Many of us ex-Christadelphians are only exes because we were pushed out, some kicking and screaming, others wailing and weeping. We still have many questions, most of which aren't getting answered by the Christadelphian body, and so we've had to turn elsewhere for answers... A lot of us have finally worked past it, but wish to prevent this from happening to others.

You do bring up a valid point about the negativity...but some stuff needs to be said and brought out into the open to help others who are suffering silently and too afraid to speak, or have no one to turn to in the broader Christadelphian community. I, for one appreciate your gentle remarks and observations. And your willingness to communicate in a positive way.

8). Without legalism, Christadelphia would have flourished. The fact that it hasn't, and isn't, is due to legalistic minded brethren ruling the masses.

9). As we write these comments yet another Christadelphian meeting has received a letter advising that none of their members are welcome to attend their Ecclesia/church.

It is high time this stinking thinking was halted! It does irreparable damage to the "victims" and the children see right through it.... and eventually come to say, "No Thanks, I would rather not step into that firing line if that is what I get for wanting to join with this church to follow Jesus."

Perhaps a well aimed law suit might cause the ignorant and fearful to think twice before sending such unlawful communications to other members of the Body of Christ...

Don't moan that you think this site is Anti-Christadelphian.... how about you get off your butt and raise your voice against legalism in all of its devilish and satanic forms.

10). I am really, really happy in our community but many are hurting. Some can't handle rejection and I can't blame them. We should be about our business of encouraging and where I worship and work I am glad this is the case. Many who have been hurt have come from legalistic backgrounds and are having to start their spiritual lives all over from scratch. I am here to encourage.

Valid hurts should be aired BUT should (also) be rectified and help offered. At Christadelphians Worldwide we have an ear.

11). I am an ex-Christadelphian, but don't wish to call myself that. I am PRO God, I walk with Jesus every day and it is His covering and presence that will see me through this life to be with Him in eternity. But I will seek to find, build, encourage, and mend any person - Christadelphian or not, in their walk with Him, because it is Jesus who actually laid down His life for me and them, not a Christadelphian.

The original poster who suggested the forum should be called 'Anti-Christadelphian' came back with: -

12). Each time someone is withdrawn from there is a reason. I believe that the correct thing to do is work it out between the parties involved. If this does not bear fruit, then the only thing to do is go your separate ways. Dr Thomas was in this situation and through the publishing of his magazine started the movement now known as Christadelphians. What I am saying is don't air your grievances here, do something about it.

13). So what do you suggest those who are disfellowshipped in haste and against their will do? Especially when the accusers and those who think they are in power refuse to sit down and talk things over?

In many cases these wicked disfellowship letters are written in haste by a minority in the meeting without the general body having any knowledge of such goings on. Do you suggest those so bullied should sweep such abuse under the carpet and pretend it did not happen? Bullies HATE being exposed.

Jesus proclaimed loud and long the wicked excesses of the bullies in His day (read Matthew 23). And the prophets of the Old Testament were far from shy exposing the bullying in their day also.

If ecclesias do not want their evil deeds made public, they need to do as Jesus said...rather than follow the ways of the devil (which system of control Jesus destroyed in His death).

14). "Each time someone is withdrawn from there is a reason"ahhhh but is that reason of God or of Man? Is it really the Father's intention to cast one aside? or is it our pathetic human reasoning used to justify the action?

Would love to hear your thoughts.....

15). Yeah, seems a lot of people here still don't understand why they were disfellowshipped.

16). We just got application forms for a Bible school at a resort in Coffs Harbour for over 40's in 2013. It has a clause about only being open to those in fellowship and not those individuals and ecclesias of whom "fellowship restrictions are currently in place." So these people aren't welcome at all. That amazed me. In fact, it has put me off wanting to attend.

17). Unbelievable. They are committing slow death by suicide! The introversion (in a bad way), the constriction and the suffocation - finally fatal. I hope they can take a deep breath and think about the way the Lord Jesus was expansive, loving and inclusive. That is the Christian way. The cup is full to overflowing, not meagre and miserly.

Then a 'died in the wool' Christadelphian comes to the aid of the original poster and writes of other posters in the third person: -

18. I am surprised at the responses your (original) post has generated. Who can understand why some cry out against fellow brethren of Christ in this manner... ("legalistic" ... who knows what that even means?)

Some have separated from the Christadelphians by choice or have been withdrawn from against their will - as they state - yet strangely, they still feel a strong tie to the bible truths that Christadelphians teach and hold to and therefore return here repeatedly.

I cannot imagine ex-Baptists flooding the Baptists sites with anti-Baptist threads, or ex-Pentecostals flooding the Pentecostal threads with antagonistic posts, so their must be something about Christadelphian doctrine and practice that keeps ex-members engaged here... (Perhaps some have interacted with "psuedo-christadelphians" and this has left them disappointed and angry in the past, but perhaps they still maintain "the faith" they had at their baptism, and this empathy with Christs teaching continues to draw them back here).

There will be so few Face Book sites that speak Truth in comparison to what can be found here after the wheat is sorted from the tares. It is the "Hope of Israel" which Christadelphians and no others hold to, and it is this "pearl of great price" that Christianity has lost sight of...the promises to Abraham and his seed are mysterious parables to most of Christianity, but Christadelphians have unlocked the message of salvation and understand the command from the Lord to defend and uphold this revealed truth...

God's truth associates men in a common purpose, and their first duty is to preserve what God has revealed in his sacred word and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, regardless of the antagonism it may generate by those opposed to it.

I will leave it there and go on to the next subject-

So next we turn to another thread discussing the BASF...

1). I can't stand his Doctrines To Be Rejected. So arrogant. This very DTBR (No 22 – “That heathens, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved”) has been a huge problem for me. I see so much death in my field. And I just shake my head at anyone who holds this to be true. God saves who He wants to.

2). The BASF including the DTBR need to be filed away in the attic if you have one or in the bottom draw of a disused desk!

3). Perhaps 'cross shredding followed by fire' would be a suitable course for a document that seeks to mandate what you should think. There is no place for it now that people can both read and think for themselves.

4). I reject that point so much (DTBR 22) it was the one that made me question everything about Christadelphia. Get off your high horse and leave it to God!

5). We all need to go back to Jesus' SoF... what was good enough for Him then, will be good enough for Him when He returns. Our BaSF/Sof's are but man made Idols.... not God mandated necessities. Anything that man creates with his hands and/or his intellect that he can control is an Idol... and anything that man creates with his hands and/or his intellect that he can use to control others is an abomination... and needs to be burned with fire!

And from an ex-Christadelphian: -

6). I get the picture. When I was a Christadelphian a good number of people told me they were only in the Christadelphians because it was the best they had found so far. An uncle said he disagreed with something quite fundamental, but wouldn't say what it was. I think he hoped I would take that as a way back into the fold. So I suppose there have always been people who have not toed the line, but kept out of mischief!

And finally: -

1). My question is: is there ever a justification for excluding a keen visitor from eating with Jesus? I can't find it in scripture.

2). I have never had any objection to sharing communion in an Anglican, or Pentecostal or Baptist, or Methodist or house church, and they have not had any problem with me (except the strict and particular Baptists!) as a visitor. I'm sure I've been to one or two where I didn't know what they were. Usually, they just say something to the effect that anyone is welcome to join in if they love Jesus. So just what is the problem for Christadelphians? I have a sneaking feeling it may be driven by fear of contamination from other Christadelphians who may bring strange ideas as much as anything. I have to admit, the first time I took communion in another church I wondered if I would be hit by a thunderbolt from heaven! I was very nervous!!

3). The purpose of this thread is to illustrate the absurdity of excluding someone from Jesus' table. A lot of ecclesias do it, I used to do it. It's got to stop

4). It is the manner in which this meal is conducted to which Paul exhorts. He tells us to conduct this meal unselfishly, reverently, suitably conscious of those around us. To do otherwise is to be guilty of disrespecting Jesus sacrifice and those he died for. When we come together as a group to remember Jesus we are all invitees; none of us are the Master or the host. I attended a church recently where the President said "if you believe you belong to Jesus join us in these emblems, it's the Lord's Table." "So, let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup". I suppose if I were "the assistant director of the universe" I would not worry who took the bread and wine. I would approach them (warmly) and ask them how they felt about this service and see if they would like to know more about the depth and love of God and Jesus symbolized in the "meal". And I would work toward the day when that meal had truer meaning for them.

5). There are many narrow-minded people here who think God 'belongs' to them. We need to 'open the floodgates of heaven' over the small mindedness of the meetings, if there is to be any substantial growth and Christian influence for the kingdom.

6). The point of this thread is that nobody has been given the right to exclude others from the Lord's Table. It doesn't matter whether I agree with you or the way you live, each person presents themselves before our Lord in their own way and with their own conscience and the conscience of my brother or sister does not serve to clean or sully my own conscience before him who is able to judge the intent of hearts and minds.

7). Are we so lacking in confidence of our faith that we cannot face meeting with someone who might not share our doctrines? Why would anyone who doesn't agree with our beliefs want to stay with us anyway. I'm far happier allowing them to make the decision than forcing one on them.

8). As I see it there is a world of difference between "open communion" [which is what Jesus taught us with His Table Manners].... and "open fellowship".... which is a classic Christadelphian myth.

Jesus had Table Communion with holy people and unholy people, with very religious and simple faithful people.... and Legalists.... with men, women and children, Hebrews, Jews and Gentiles, prostitutes,

murderers, zealots, and a whole host of uncouth and unsavory folk... but He never fellowshipped any of their unfruitful works of darkness.

9). After our disfellowship, and eventually visiting other churches in trying to find a place to be accepted and worship, we continually witnessed lives of dedication, commitment, sacrifice etc, that would have eclipsed anything we had seen within Christadelphia in our entire lives. It became very real to us, that for us to sit and say "you are not worthy" of partaking communion with us, would have at the very least been totally hypocritical. This fact alone, forget doctrines, forget eliteness, forget who we think we are, these lives actually bore the fruit of Christ in me, the only hope of glory. This alone, was the main factor to us never returning to Christadelphians, because of the self-righteous piety that says, we are the only people that worship the true God. It has become very evident to us in our walk, that God works with individuals in every religion. He is coming for the person, not the denomination!

10). We were loving life in Christadelphia and were fully committed Christadelphians, but when that was made impossible for us to attend, then what were our options? Eventually in need of fellowship, we fearfully made our way into another church (something I thought I would never do as a Christadelphian), and guess what.....30 years later we are still very happy in their fellowship. The reason is, 'open' fellowship is no different to 'closed' fellowship, except there may be more people with an opportunity to talk to and share with God. The reason for this is that my fellowship in communion is with God and Jesus. Other people are also meeting with God and Jesus in the same room and sharing with them. Do I feel 'defiled' because they are there with me? Of course not, I am glad and thankful that every person is there, because it means that they, like me, are all trying to live and find their way through this journey with God the same as I am. To think that you have 'fellowship' with someone based on what they 'believe', is fraught with problems, as all Christadelphian forums show, there is huge variation of ideas and understandings on the scriptures anyway. There is ONE faith and ONE hope, and that is in God and His Son. We cannot control who God calls as His children, we are only called on to LOVE them.

11). All the things you say we should do, I and everybody else in our church does, and it's not Christadelphian. I know God loves us all - please don't make the mistake of putting Christadelphians on a pedestal over other churches, you haven't been there. Oh, one thing I haven't witnessed in our church in 30 years, hmmm, yes, disfellowship, only love and encouragement abound.

More recently another Christadelphian has complained about this forum saying the name should be changed. This too has been rejected. Perhaps these "Official" Christadelphians should examine themselves a little more thoroughly to see if they cannot reflect the love of God more perfectly rather than practice the bullying of the Pharisees as in the story of the man born blind; after all God is Love and all disciples of Jesus should try to emulate that love as did Jesus – He said "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you."

May we all put this into daily practice. Russell.

The Thousand Year Reign of Jesus

We had a dear and respected old brother years ago who in speaking of the things we believe rarely failed to refer to The Millennium. The sequence of the sounds "l," "n" and "m" made it a difficult word for him to pronounce and it often came out as "The Mallemiun" or even "The Mellium", but he had a very clear conception of what the thousand years reign of Christ would be like, an age of peace and plenty during which the Saints would administer true justice in the earth and the mortal people who survive the tribulations through which it has to pass before the Kingdom of God can be established will be turned to God. Many Christians no longer believe in The Millennium and think that immediately Christ returns and the resurrection of his people has taken place the words of Christ will be fulfilled; "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:41-44). This is the literal truth of what will be the final effect of the rule of Christ - the elimination of the wicked and the reward of the faithful, but other scriptures reveal it as the result of a process, not an instantaneous change brought about by Heaven. The resurrection will be like that, so will the change to incorruption of those who are alive, but the physical, political and economic changes, by which the earth and its inhabitants are to be regenerated will take-place over measurable periods of time and will be seen and need to be seen, to be happening as the direct result of the reign of Christ.

The word Millennium is not in the Bible, but in the 20th chapter of Revelation the period of 1,000 years is specified six times; in verse 6 it says “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years,” and this is after the first resurrection, so those who deny that there is to be a Millennium have a great difficulty. I can see what a problem is raised by the following verse “When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” and although it seems anachronistic to think that after a thousand years of peace under Divine rule evil could break out again, that is what this vision tells us and I think we can only accept it. No doubt if we are so fortunate as to be amongst those who live at that day we shall understand it. Compared with the span of life any of us have experienced, a thousand years seems an enormously long period, but it is in fact slightly less than has elapsed since the reign of King Alfred and about half of the years since Christ ascended. So that in historical terms a millennium is not a very long period - about a sixth of recorded history if we accept that the creation of Adam was about 4,000 B.C.

When we consider what the condition of earth will be after the final conflict which will overthrow all the evil powers which have flourished hitherto, under the figures of “that old dragon, the devil and Satan; the beast and the false prophet,” representing Islam and apostate Christianity, Communism, both Russian and Chinese and every other political/religious form of oppression and authoritarianism we can see that some mighty changes will be needed.

But there is a very much greater and far-reaching business to be settled during the millennial reign. This is the settling up of the account between God and His people, the Jews. Jesus told his disciples that they should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and if this is to be literally fulfilled then most of the Jews who have ever lived will need to rise from the dead, be judged out of the things written in the books and justly rewarded or punished as they deserve. Some we know have been punished already and have perished but the great majority - including the millions of innocents who have suffered and been killed in persecution and gas-chambers since ever they were dispersed will never have had a proper chance and they are, every one, in a covenant relationship with Yahweh because of their descent from Abraham. Many, like the apostles and those Jews who comprised the early churches and those who died in faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 will be in the 1st Resurrection, or come with Christ, but the vast majority who have never known or accepted Christ as their Messiah are still God’s chosen people and they have to be dealt with, on the basis of The Law, with justice and compassion. This is the great work to be carried through in the Millennium and it will put the record straight and give the answer to those who complain “If God is supreme and all-loving why does He let such things happen?” He lets such things happen because unless men have seen and experienced the evils they can bring upon themselves and their fellow men they will never understand the goodness and wisdom of God. The Bible only gives us very sketchy lines of the future but there can be no doubt that there are wonderful changes to come and that we are chosen to take part in them. If nuclear war brings the final destruction then mankind will have been the author and agent of its own retribution in rejecting what God has revealed of His purpose and design. The only kind of life which can be immune to atomic radiation is spirit life, which will be the life of the Saints in Christ, and once the tribulations of the last days are past, these will be the people to put things right. Afterwards, says Zechariah, “It shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the coat-tails of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.”

Your brother in Jesus Christ. Ernest Brady

DANIEL

In this exhortation we shall not deal with Daniel's prophecies. Much has been written and argued about them and probably not fully understood until the Lord's return. But I think the time has come to consider Daniel as a person, and more, as a man of God.

Three times Daniel has been addressed as a man greatly beloved (Daniel 9:23; 10:11; 10:19) For this reason a little of our time should be well spent in considering what made him so beloved, and to see what we can learn.

The first thing that comes to mind is that he was a man of prayer and acknowledged God in all things. One of his tasks was the interpretation of three dreams to two different rulers. And on all occasions he made it abundantly clear that it was not he, by 'his own power and wisdom, but God who gave the interpretation.

His first task was especially difficult. He had not only to interpret a dream, but tell the king what the dream was. The king's astrologers and soothsayers must have had some elementary knowledge of God. They realized the existence of higher power as the only source of such wisdom (Daniel 2:11), But how did Daniel deal with the situation? He and his three companions first prayed to God. And after God revealed to him the dream with the interpretation he thanked God. And let us ask ourselves, do we always thank God after a prayer is answered? Then when he went before the king he first of all acknowledged God as the Giver of all revelations (Daniel 2:27, 28) "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

Then follows the well known dream of the great image, and its interpretation. Later, he had another dream to interpret for Nebuchadnezzar, when he became high minded and failed to acknowledge God. His greatness went to his head and he lost his reason for a while.

And his last dream to Belshazzar to interpret the writing on the wall, a phrase which has since become part of our language. On all these occasion he never failed to reveal the source of all wisdom.

Another trait in his character was that the high office which he held under several successive rulers never went to his head, unlike in the case of Nebuchadnezzar who lost his reason over it. But Daniel never got too big for his boots, something which statesmen of our day could well take an example from. In this respect he resembled Samuel, another highly devoted prophet, who never sought gain or advantage for his own benefit. The office which Daniel held was probably equivalent to that of prime minister.

Daniel was a man of prayer, and of supreme trust in God. This he had to demonstrate when Darius, at the instigation of some jealous troublemakers, threw him in the den of lions. It goes to his credit that he kept on praying openly, regardless of the consequences. It put Darius into a nasty quandary. He knew that some jealous trouble makers were the cause of it, Darius also showed some faith in God, for he said to Daniel (Daniel 6:16) "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." But His faith did not go quite far enough to stand up to the trouble makers; be firm and have the courage to say "No." The fear of making a fool of himself and to be deposed from the throne was the cause of his weakness; a case similar to that of Pilate some five centuries later, who did not really want to crucify our Lord, but lacked courage to stand up to the Pharisees. And how glad Darius must have been when Daniel came out unharmed, and his trust in God vindicated. This event must have taught Darius a lesson which he remembered for the rest of his life.

Another example of Daniel as a man of prayer. We read in chapter 9, verse 20, that he had a personal sin to confess. We are not told what that sin was, but sometimes I wonder whether God, in His wisdom had a purpose in allowing the fact that Daniel had a sin to confess to be recorded. Was there perhaps the danger that successive generations might look on Daniel as a sort of semi-god? To this day many revere people who pretend to receive messages from the supernatural. More so in ancient times when people had great faith in astrologers, crystal gazers and such like. There were plenty of them at Daniel's time, as we gather from references to them in the book under consideration. And from the point of view of his and subsequent

generations, the record of Daniel having sinned might have brought him down to earth a little in man's estimation.

And then the final divine message, the last verse in the Book of Daniel "For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." What an assurance, what a comfort for ageing Daniel, to know he met with God's approval. And how simple to understand after the many complicated prophecies which Daniel himself sometimes had difficulty to understand. If ever anyone could fall asleep with a peace of mind, Daniel (and later Paul) was one of them-

And what of our position? We have the same assurance in the Scriptures if we do our part and hold fast to the end. But we all must admit that in our daily lives we have a long way to go before we come up to Daniel and other worthies of old. We need God's mercy to forgive us our faults. But we have our High Priest in heaven through whom we can draw nigh to God with a humble spirit of repentance. Daniel lived before Christ's ministry. He was unable to bring the animal sacrifices pointing forward to Christ, as the temple was destroyed and he was in captivity with his fellow countrymen. So he is one of those to whom faith was counted for righteousness

We who live in these last days are just about beginning to see prophecy fulfilled, and perhaps soon shall witness events prophesied by Daniel, but not fully understood by him.

What a prospect for us to see such events unfold! So let us take Daniel's life as an example and let us also take to heart what not to do from the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar who took too much credit to himself, and from Darius who did not have the will power to refuse to throw Daniel to the lions. And in these days of lack of interest in Divine matters, let us not be afraid to dare to be a Daniel when necessary and to stand alone.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.