

Ecclesial Supplement

PERSONALITIES or PRINCIPLES?

A Review Of Ecclesial Problems In Australia

We have received from *The Christadelphian* Office, a copy of the article entitled: *Fellowship: Its Spirit And Practice*, together with a printed circular letter over the signature of Brother A. Nicholls.

The article, and letter, we understand, has been circulated throughout the Ecclesial world.

We deeply regret that *The Christadelphian* has seen fit to draw Ecclesias throughout the world into the arena of problems affecting the Brotherhood in this country. It complicates and widens the scope of trouble that we have been at pains to simplify and localise, and which we had hoped, with patience and the blessing of "the God of all peace," to solve without involving Ecclesias abroad.

Some months back, an appeal was made to *The Christadelphian* by a number of Ecclesias in this country, representing well over 1,000 brethren and sisters, asking that the publication of any matter affecting fellowship in this country be held up, as it was believed that it could only complicate the situation. Both by cable and letter this appeal was made, but to date has been completely ignored. Not only have those Ecclesias and brethren been refused the courtesy of a reply, but now *The Christadelphian* has sent this letter throughout the Ecclesial world, presenting, we believe, a distorted view of conditions here.

The appeal to *The Christadelphian* referred to above had been made in view of an important gathering that had been convened in the Adelaide area. A number of brethren in this country, representing some 30 Ecclesias with a total membership of over 2,000, subsequently came together to objectively consider the problems affecting the Brotherhood in this country. An

excellent spirit prevailed at the meetings held; the problems were simplified; and it was felt that progress had been made.

It is the considered opinion of quite a number here that this progress will be hindered by this article and letter; for in them, Brother Nicholls has presumed to declare that the problems are more those relating to personalities rather than doctrines.

This is strange coming from a Brother who is removed some 13,000 miles from the scene of dispute, and who has never visited this country, and it is quite obvious that he has been influenced by others with a biased viewpoint.

The Problems Are Doctrinal

There has been quite a determined attempt on the part of some to dismiss the controversy in Australia on the grounds that it is a matter of personalities rather than of principles. This conclusion has been cast up like dust into the air to hide the true nature of problems in this country; and overseas visitors have readily seized on to this excuse in order to justify fellowship with all.

For example, an overseas visiting speaker, recently told a group of brethren in the Sydney area, that *Logos* is responsible for the trouble in this country. On what grounds did he allege this? On the grounds that some opposed to *Logos* declared it to him, and he was prepared to believe them, though he had not taken the accusation to us personally.

We can assure readers in every part of the Ecclesial world, that if the controversy in this country were merely a matter of personalities, the scope of the Truth in Australia in relation to population (larger than in any other country) is large enough to absorb

differing viewpoints on unessential matters. For years there have been those in Australia who have resisted the policy of *Logos* based upon the pioneer writings, and separation from the world, and have attempted to

counter this by attacks that we have persistently ignored. They have become more vocal and more determined since they have received encouragement from other sources, and with this there has emerged those who would

EDITORIAL NOTE

Never have we had a more difficult task to perform in the literary field than the writing of this article. Much of it seems so negative. We have no desire to recapitulate the failings of others, whether doctrinal or otherwise, and have only referred to these matters in the past when we have considered that circumstances demanded it. But we feel that with the issuance of the article by "The Christadelphian" Office, the obvious misunderstanding that it reveals of the state of things existing among the Australian ecclesias, and the fact that it has been circulated throughout the Ecclesial world, demand that we set forth a factual report of incidents leading to the present state of affairs.

Five years ago, the Truth in Australia was in a flourishing condition. Baptisms were frequent. In the Adelaide area alone, some fifty baptisms were being reported annually. The study classes were well attended; special efforts were enthusiastically supported; ecclesias were growing rapidly. But since then the seeds of dissension have been sown within the Body with the result that many feel discouraged, the Brotherhood has turned on itself instead of directing its efforts against the world; and converts have dwindled.

We are determined to face up to the issues before us. Ecclesias are advised to put their house in order; to clearly state where they stand in the matter of doctrine; to refuse to compromise the truth for error; and then commence a vigorous policy and program of rebuilding from within. By so doing, and with the blessing of the Father and the influence of the Word, we anticipate that the Truth will flourish in Australia, and that the Brotherhood will profit by the experiences through which it has gone through. We would appreciate hearing from brethren who are prepared to co-operate to that end, and we hope, later this year, to announce a vigorous rebuilding program for the benefit of all interested.

— EDITOR.

likewise challenge the basic doctrines believed among us.

We are prepared to remain largely silent when the attacks do not bear

upon fundamentals, but refuse to do so when they do. At present, the disputes are matters of doctrine. They are threefold:

1. The doctrine of the Atonement;
2. The doctrine of the present possession of the Holy Spirit;
3. The doctrine of fellowship.

The *Christadelphian* does not see it as a doctrinal issue. Brother Nicholls suggests that Ecclesias here should first establish "a proper basis for inter-ecclesial life"; and then "the doctrinal matters be considered at a common table."

We can only conclude that he has failed to read the literature sent him, and therefore does not appreciate how fundamental are the errors being propagated in some circles.

His assessment of the trouble is not only incorrect, but his suggested solution is extremely naive. The trouble has developed from the action taken by brethren who have been forced to withdraw from Ecclesias which persist in either teaching or condoning errors contrary to the basic elements of the Truth. There did originally exist "a proper basis for inter-ecclesial life," but it was disrupted by false doctrine.

Take our own relationship with some of the affected Ecclesias. In the past we have closely collaborated with the Shaftesbury Road (Sydney) and the Petrie Tce (Brisbane) Ecclesias, as well as with H. Twine, of Queensland. In regard to the Ecclesias, we have co-operated with both as guest speaker in prolonged special efforts. Moreover, in the past, we have extended the hand of co-operation to Brother Twine, assisting him in the work to which he put his hands both financially and otherwise, because we admired his spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause. When he commenced a Magazine some years ago, we gave him wholehearted assistance, such as he did not receive from any other source. It is only since these Ecclesias have condoned error, and Brother Twine has openly advocated it, that we have seen the need to withdraw support, and to oppose what was being condoned and taught.

In other words, there did exist "a proper basis for inter-ecclesial life," but false doctrine has destroyed it. It will only be restored when the false doctrine is repudiated.

The evidence suggests that *The*

Christadelphian Committee has ignored the documentation of the controversy which has been supplied it, and instead has listened to those who have put it down to personalities. It declares:

"In connection with the doctrinal issues the Committee of The Christadelphian is willing to examine any problems which the Australian Brotherhood might care to submit. Such an examination would be carried out in an advisory capacity only with the intention of setting out what we understand the position of the Brotherhood to be concerning the matters which affect our common faith."

The doctrinal issues of the controversy were forwarded to the Office months ago; but nothing has been heard from it concerning them.

Problems In Australia

The problems are threefold:

(1) — There is the problem of liberalism. In the past, a minority has raised its voice against the policy of Bible study and of conservatism, both in regard to exposition and practice, which has been a prominent feature of Australian Ecclesial life. There was a demand for greater liberty of expression and action. If it had been that the "liberals" claimed this only for themselves, it would have been ignored; but they persisted in demanding that it become Ecclesial policy. The writings of our pioneers were deprecated as a basis for further study; new ideas including those tinged with the theory of evolution, or involving the repudiation of the traditional concept of Bible prophecy and the exposition of the Apocalypse and so forth were advanced, introducing a discordant voice into Ecclesial discussions. With this attempted break-down of standard expositions of the Word there was joined a break-down of the attitude of separation, particularly towards the world outside. The following expression from *The Believer* Editorial is typical:

"Logos have no time for other denominations, believing that they are 'lost.' Others would be unwilling to pass this judgment, realising that this is the prerogative of God."

We believe that such teaching can only weaken the power of truth, and therefore have opposed it and will continue to do so.

If other denominations are not "lost," why trouble them with our doctrines?

This, indeed, has been advocated by some who feel that we should discontinue agitating against the error of such denominations as the Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostals, and devote ourselves to drawing by the power of so-called "good works."

Whilst recognising that we have a responsibility to "do good" to all as opportunity affords, we likewise are called upon to "contend earnestly for the faith," and maintain an attitude of separation from the world.

We believe that a statement like the above demonstrates a doctrinal weakness that is perilous in the extreme; it undermines the basic requirement of the Truth: separation from the world of darkness without. Paul taught:

"Be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you . . . saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

He thus declared that our relationship with the Father is governed by our separation from the world; by recognising that it is "lost" and seeking to be saved through Jesus Christ the Lord.

The "liberal" minority who wanted to lower the barrier of separation with the world was opposed by a group which set itself against the principles of modernism, and by an appeal to the Word was able to effectively show that these principles are wrong. Thus little was heard of the "liberal" minority at that time.

When some overseas visitors came to Australia and set forth a similar approach to that of the "liberals" as far as the traditional interpretation of the Word was concerned, they were likewise opposed, leading to the fiction that has been persistently but incorrectly fostered, that they were being boycotted because they came from England, or that they were the vic-

tims of personality issues. That was quite incorrect, for originally every facility was made available to them by all groups in Australia.

(2) — The second problem is that of false doctrine. There is a minority of errorists who challenge the truth as believed among us, and set forth in the Unity Book. As far as the Atonement is concerned, some have embraced the errors proclaimed by the Nazarene fellowship of England (Turneyism). The attitude of the "liberals" (not in themselves advocates of the errors) gave this other minority encouragement to be vocal in their propagation of error. After all, if *The Believer* does not believe that "other denominations are lost," it will not be very insistent upon the Truth being maintained in its purity in our own midst, and will naturally decry agitation against such as being motivated by personalities. And there was and is agitation, because the "conservatives" believe that the Truth is "not a vain thing" because "it is life" itself (Deut. 32:46-47). They view the propagation of false doctrine as a real cause of concern. It is not a matter of personalities but of principles with them; they believe that eternal life itself is bound up in preserving the Truth in its purity (John 17:3; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-2), and they are not prepared to capitulate in the matter. It is dishonouring to the Truth and its demands, to decry this as controversy involving mere personalities.

(3) — The third element in the controversy is the "conservative" group. They advocate the personal, analytical study of the Word, recognise the value of the pioneer writings as an aid thereto, and are active in the propagation of the Truth to the world outside.

Ecclesial life in every country has its "liberals" and "conservatives." However, in Australia, there is a tendency (not always the best) to be blunt and frank in stating a matter. Generally, Australians are realists, and because of that, are sometimes misunderstood by those of other countries. In this controversy, the facts have been stated without ambiguity, and

onlookers have imagined a worse state than actually exists. They view it as a matter of personalities and not principles.

False Doctrine

The opposition of the "liberals" was never a real problem. They accused others of desiring to create a faction, of being dictatorial in demands regarding separation and study, of not being as merciful or as prayerful as they should be; but these accusations were either ignored or rebutted. There were claims of "organised groups of Ecclesias," of a "Logos party" and so forth; but generally no attempt was made to counter such accusations, as it seemed unimportant to do so.

But suddenly, the Brotherhood in Australia was faced with a doctrinal issue. It had relationship to the Atonement, and challenged the Statement of Faith and Unity basis.

It erupted in the Townsville Ecclesia, North Queensland, and Brother H. Twine, a member of that Ecclesia, was the main advocate of the wrong ideas. This split the Townsville Ecclesia into three: (1) — a group that left and commenced an independent meeting advocating Turneyism; (2) — a second group that refused to remain with the truncated Ecclesia so long as it continued to fellowship Brother Twine; (3) — the Townsville Ecclesia itself.

The Central Standing Committee (a Committee stationed in Sydney but which has never been representative of all the Brotherhood in this country) was asked to adjudicate. It branded the group that had formed the independent meeting advocating Turneyism as completely heretical, and refused to acknowledge it as Christadelphian. It branded Brother Twine as heretical and stated that he should be refused fellowship. Accordingly, when its recommendation was adopted, temporary reconciliation was effected with the two remaining remnants of the Ecclesia.

Again, at this point, we draw attention to the recommendation of *The Christadelphian* Committee for solution of the problem in Australia. It suggests that *first*, ecclesias in Aus-

tralia should establish a proper basis for inter-ecclesial life among all who hold the common faith; and *second* that the doctrinal issues be then considered.

This recommendation fails to appreciate the real problem, and is completely topsy-turvy. If "all who hold the common faith" were to exclude those who challenge it, as the Unity Book requires, the problem would collapse overnight. Take Townsville as an example. The rejection of the one advocating error in the Ecclesia brought reconciliation; but the trouble was accentuated and widened when other Ecclesias, a thousand miles distant from Townsville, refused to endorse the stand, and opened the doors of fellowship to the one rejected by his own meeting. In spite of the subsequent recommendations of the Central Standing Committee to these erring Ecclesias, Brother Twine was afforded fellowship by them, and so grave was the situation, that when members of the CSC visited the Brisbane area they avoided fellowship with meetings harboring Brother Twine.

Yet we have *The Christadelphian* claiming that the problem is one of personalities and due to the failure of the Ecclesias to establish inter-ecclesial relationships. On the contrary, none of the parties involved, neither the Townsville Ecclesia, Petrie Terrace Ecclesia, Caloundra Ecclesia, Brother H. Twine, nor The Central Standing Committee are separated in the way suggested, nor could they be classed among those whom we have described above as "the conservatives." The issue was not one of personalities involving those of two different groups, but of principles involving the challenging of fundamental doctrine.

Division In Queensland

At that point, the false doctrine propagated by Brother Twine had been instrumental in seven leaving the Truth to form an independent meeting, and had divided the Townsville Ecclesia. After investigation of the matter, the CSC had recommended that Brother H. Twine be denied fellowship.

If Ecclesias had implemented that recommendation the ensuing crisis

would have been avoided. Instead, as stated above, Brother Twine presented himself at the Petrie Terrace Ecclesia, a large Ecclesia in Brisbane, one thousand miles distant from Townsville, and that Ecclesia persisted in fellowshipping Brother Twine.

Soon trouble erupted in the Brisbane Ecclesia. Brother Twine publicly criticised an exhortation by a local member, and this precipitated a crisis. The Arranging Brethren, doubtless bearing in mind the trouble in Townsville and the recommendation of the CSC, first refused to accept Brother Twine in fellowship, but at a business meeting of the Ecclesia, found their action reversed.

A number, dissatisfied with the teaching of Brother Twine and that of his sympathisers in the Petrie Terrace Ecclesia, withdrew and formed the Wilston Ecclesia.

Again, the sub-committee of the CSC investigated the matter. It issued its findings which were circulated to all Ecclesias in Australia: that Brother Twine was in error and should not be fellowshipped. At the same time, Wilston Ecclesia was granted membership with the CSC, which endorsed the action of the members of that Ecclesia in withdrawing from Petrie Terrace Ecclesia because of false doctrine, and forming the new Ecclesia.

The recommendation of the CSC was made prior to the last Australian Conference, held in 1969, and many Ecclesias endorsed the action of the CSC. Even Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia urged its members not to attend the Conference at Petrie Terrace; and many other Ecclesias acted similarly.

This fact reveals the biased reporting of this trouble. Individual Ecclesias that were looked upon as "conservative" were dubbed "Logos" Ecclesias, and were indicted because of such recommendations to their members; whereas the action of other Ecclesias, such as Shaftesbury Road, was conveniently overlooked.

It was regretted by many in Australia, that at such a time of crisis, a member of *The Christadelphian* Committee did accept the invitation to attend the Conference as main speaker. True, Brother H. Twine was asked not

to participate so long as the Conference was held, but in view of the fact that the host Ecclesia was prepared to accept him subsequently, indicated a sad lack of knowledge on the part of those brethren as to the doctrine and requirements of fellowship.

Remember, Brother Twine had been disfellowshipped by his own ecclesia, had been branded heretical by the CSC, had been responsible for division throughout the country, had been partly instrumental in seven leaving the Truth and yet had been harboured in fellowship by the host Ecclesia.

In view of all this, surely readers can understand how the following statement, made by the Editor of *The Christadelphian* in the letter mentioned above, causes irritation, and is certainly not the balm that will bring healing:

"It is said that current troubles in Australia stem largely from disputations concerning the Atonement . . . It is our experience, however, that most disputes are in fact rooted in personalities . . ."

We agree that personalities are inevitably involved, but where fundamental doctrines are challenged or held up to ridicule, are we merely to call for greater inter-ecclesial life? Is not a common acknowledgement of our basic truths the foundation of true Ecclesial peace? Where brethren agree on fundamentals will they not find a way around lesser problems? This has been the case in the past, and would be so again.

Who To Fellowship?

The prevailing situation of disputation and division was worsened by overseas brethren condoning and excusing the retention of Brother Twine in fellowship by the Brisbane Ecclesia, often on the grounds that he had been misunderstood or misrepresented.

Misunderstood or misrepresented by whom? The CSC had documented his teaching as erroneous after long discussion with him, and its delegate, when investigating his case in Brisbane, had fellowshipped with the break-away Wilston Ecclesia — surely en-

dorsing the action of its members in withdrawing from Petrie Terrace Ecclesia. Moreover, Brother Twine had been quite open in criticising both the Statement of Faith and Unity Book (not in opposing extremists setting forth the implantation theory as alleged), and quite free with erroneous statements concerning the nature of man and its relationship to the Lord Jesus — and this in exposition not in combatting other theories.

This teaching of Brother Twine has been supplied to *The Christadelphian*, and yet, in spite of this, its circular letter urges brethren in other countries to extend fellowship to both sections in Australia. This means, that, in addition to those who hold the truth, they are being asked to extend fellowship to:

1. Those who have openly challenged the Statement of Faith, or those who condone this being done;
2. Those who believe that they have a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit to speak in an unknown tongue; or those who condone this error;
3. Those who claim that fellowship should be extended to all Amended and Unamended alike, as set forth in *The Believer* articles, without any formal healing of the breach.

What is surprising to us is that *The Christadelphian* advocates a different policy to what it preaches. This, doubtless, because it has been incorrectly informed as to what is the situation here. It preaches, in its article on Fellowship, the need to preserve the basic elements of the Truth in their purity; but it calls upon the Brotherhood outside of Australia to extend fellowship to both sides alike, though the facts of apostasy on the part of Brother Twine and others were set before it months ago.

Let us illustrate what this means in relation to one area: the American Continent. A member of The Believer Committee (Bro. G. Bacon) has openly fellowshiped with Unamended Ecclesias during his frequent visits to the States; and this to the embarrassment of local Central brethren who are currently negotiating with the Unamended brethren a basis for re-

union. He has furthermore submitted articles for publication in *Christadelphian* (an Unamended periodical) advocating an "open" fellowship. There is nothing surreptitious in his attitude in so doing, for he firmly believes that what he has stated is right, and he intends to implement it. The recommendation of *The Christadelphian* is in accordance with his principles though, doubtless, that Magazine does not intend it that way. However, if American brethren are to extend fellowship equally to both sides, why should not Australian brethren fellowship Amended and Unamended alike? The problems of the American Continent are not experienced here.

If that were done, it would not be long before the very basis of unity between the Central and Berean Ecclesias, established at the Jersey City Conference, would be destroyed, and the Brotherhood split open again. It was for that reason, Ecclesias in Australia appealed to *The Christadelphian* not to enter into the dispute by issuing its recommendations regarding fellowship. We know, only too well, that the action of some English Ecclesias in extending fellowship alike to the Amended and Unamended groups in the States is a cause of concern, and we do not want the same situation to develop here or elsewhere.

In Australia, the dispute is not so much one of doctrine (most are agreed that Brethren H. Twine and W. Pearce are in error) but that of fellowship. If those two brethren were disciplined by the Ecclesias that are harbouring them, the dispute would collapse. But brethren do not see the need of this. They speak of Ecclesial autonomy as though an ecclesia can act and believe what it likes without being called in question. There is no true loyalty to the Statement of Faith in such an attitude. For example, an Ecclesia asked us to publish that it was on the BASF, though some of its Arranging Brethren openly rejected its teaching. Nevertheless, it claimed that its basis of fellowship is the BASF, even though acceptance of its teaching is not insisted upon, and rejection of its teaching is permitted. So it loudly proclaimed that it endorses the BASF

and Unity Book whilst extending fellowship to others who publicly denounce both!

Before making its recommendation, the doctrinal issues should have been closely examined by *The Christadelphian*, but this, it implies, it has not done, and invites Ecclesias to send details to it for consideration. Those details, however, have been in its possession for months. If, in spite of this evidence, it is still convinced that the dispute is a matter of personalities more than doctrines, why did it not disclose this to those who have been in touch with it, before publicising the idea to the Ecclesial world?

The Central Standing Committee's Dilemma

That the problem was a matter of principles and not personalities is manifest by the dilemma of the CSC. It had created a problem for itself from which it found it most difficult to extricate itself. It had interrogated Brother Twine, declared him to be heretical, and circularised the Brotherhood in this country urging that he should not be fellowshiped.

Other circulars followed, from Brisbane and Caloundra, repudiating the CSC recommendation; other ecclesias, after investigation of the facts, broke off association with the Brisbane Ecclesia which persisted in harbouring Brother Twine in fellowship.

The CSC found itself in the strange position of indicting those very ecclesias that had acted upon its recommendation!

It tried to extricate itself from the embarrassing situation by calling upon Brother Twine to retract.

But he refused to do so.

A sub-committee was appointed for the purpose. The members were instructed in their duties by the CSC chairman, Brother J. Doble. The printed directive was as follows:

"The sub-committee should aim to report that under sympathetic questioning in a brotherly way, the sub-committee agrees that Bro. Twine's beliefs may be understood in accordance with the Basis of Fellowship."

Is that the way to deal with false

doctrine? What about the seven who had left the Truth through the propagation of false teaching? What of the wreck of divided ecclesias that littered the State of Queensland from Townsville in the north for over one thousand miles to Brisbane in the south? When such comprise the fruit of a person's labours, should he not be asked to plainly retrace what he formerly taught, and openly, and honestly, acknowledge the Truth?

That is what some declared should be done, and were accused of being motivated by personalities for so doing!

Since then, the CSC has issued a paper exonerating Brother Twine of false doctrine in spite of the plain declaration of error made by him almost the same time as he was interrogated by it! However, the CSC inconsistently demands that he do not enter into any contention on the subject of the Atonement.

Why not? If Brother Twine "loyally upholds the Unity Basis of Fellowship in both its doctrinal and its fellowship clauses" as alleged, why make such a demand as that?

The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit

In distributing its article on Fellowship, *The Christadelphian* included a covering letter warning lest the controversies disturbing the Brotherhood in this country should adversely affect the Mission work.

It is ironic, in view of that statement, that the Mission Committee in Australia brought to light a further controversy: this relating to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Brother W. Pearce, on returning from mission work overseas, urged that the miraculous gifts of the spirit should be sought and used to supplement preaching in backward countries, as was done by other denominations. He claimed that he had received a gift from God to speak in an unknown tongue, and offered to give a demonstration, which was refused.

He represented the Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia on the Bible Mission sub-committee, and when that Committee protested to his Ecclesia, Brother Pearce was withdrawn as its repre-

sentative.

But what of the doctrine he advocated?

The Ecclesia concerned did not consider it a matter of fellowship. In fact, when other Ecclesias took it up with Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia, they found the replies most unsatisfactory. The Ecclesia itself became involved in controversy, leading to some withdrawing therefrom. Sister Ecclesias in the same city were drawn into the controversy, and after investigation, at least seven in the immediate area broke off associations with Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia.

The Ecclesia retaliated by circularising the Australian Ecclesias throughout the Continent outlining its attitude. In a final statement, it acknowledged that Brother Pearce claimed to have a gift from God to speak in an unknown tongue, but it declared that it was not prepared to repudiate his claim, nor relate the doctrine of the present possession of the miraculous gifts of the spirit as error, for it only "related error to those doctrines defined as such in the Statement of Faith."

In other words, a person could believe that he had a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, that he could speak in an unknown tongue, or perform miracles, without it being considered vital. Therefore, Brother Pearce would be retained in fellowship.

The *Christadelphian* article urges that the Bible, rather than the Statement of Faith, should be our guide, without any weakening of the point of the doctrine referred to in the latter. We agree with that, and it was the basis of our urging of the Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia to review the seriousness of the claim to possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in the light of the Scriptures. We offered to meet with the Arranging Brethren for that purpose; but our offer was not accepted.

Let it be clearly understood, that in both matters: that relating to the Brisbane Ecclesia and the Atonement, and that relating to Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia and the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, other Ecclesias have been drawn into the controversies by the actions of those Ecclesias in cir-

cularising the Brotherhood throughout Australia, hoping for endorsement of the stand that they adopted. This action involved other Ecclesias, and so the controversy spread. It is not a matter of personalities, but of principles.

The Doctrine Of Fellowship

Today in Australia, some Ecclesias are found expressing glib endorsement of the BASF and the Unity Basis of Fellowship without any proper acceptance of its teaching. Some claim that by saying they use this as a "basis" enables them to reason that it is a "basis" merely for discussion, and can be held by its members with serious reservations. Some have openly claimed that the Cooper-Carter Addendum in its teaching repudiates Clause 5 and other clauses of the BASF.

The Brisbane Ecclesia has claimed that it is on the Unity agreement, but that this permits it to fellowship those who reject clauses of the Statement of Faith.

The recorder of the Caloundra Ecclesia declares that the Addendum is provided to replace clauses 5 to 12 of the BASF; some have even gone on record as stating that the BASF is a "blasphemous document."

We believe that the Addendum is complementary to the BASF and is designed to express its teaching, and that if it were frankly accepted, it would provide a satisfactory basis. It was never intended to supersede the BASF. It was designed to express in simple terms the basic facts concerning the Atonement, particularly in refutation of the theory of alienation by nature (or Andrewism).

We believe that the only satisfactory basis of fellowship is that adopted by the Ecclesias of the American Continent at the time unity was established in that country, known as the Jersey City Resolutions. Fellowship was limited to those who endorsed the BASF; and to Ecclesias that loyally maintained this stand and refused to condone or harbour those who did not.

But some refuse to do this because it means disfellowshipping those in error. The attitude of some towards

fellowship has been indicated by the publication in *The Believer* of the article by the late Brother Clementson, of England, on Fellowship, which was rejected by the Central Fellowship at the time when unity was established in that country, and is at variance with the present article issued by *The Christadelphian*.

Ecclesias have a responsibility in this regard that they must not evade. To do so is to lower the barriers to error, and plunge the Brotherhood into controversy, as has been the case in Australia.

The agreed basis of unity in Australia in intent was similar to that of the Jersey City Resolutions; though that is now being denied by some. Certainly, it would be farcical to establish unity on one basis in the American Continent, and upon an entirely different basis in Australia.

The principles of the Central Fellowship, as laid down by Brethren Roberts, Walker and Carter are acceptance of the BASF on the part of individuals, and the retention in fellowship by Ecclesias only of those accepting that basis.

There are determined efforts in Australia, at the present moment, to destroy that basis of fellowship. They are being resisted, and will continue to be resisted, even though we are being told that the emphasis upon fellowship as far as the English Ecclesias are concerned has shifted.

Simplifying The Issue

It was obvious to many brethren in Australia, that the Central Standing Committee was incapable of producing a satisfactory formula for unity. For example, some of its most prominent members (the president and secretary being two) were members of the Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia, itself involved in controversy. Other avenues had to be sought as an alternative.

The suburban Ecclesias in the Adelaide area, representing over 500 brethren and sisters, invited all Ecclesias to send delegates to Adelaide for a frank inter-ecclesial conference on the problem.

Invitations were sent to all ecclesias without exception (including Petrie

Terrace and Shaftesbury Road) to consider the matter and frankly place their particular viewpoint before the gathering.

The meetings were held during the week-end of November 20-21, and proved to be most successful, with the promise of most hopeful results. Some 39 Ecclesias throughout Australia were represented by either delegates or observers.

Attendances at the meetings were extremely large, reaching their peak with some 850 brethren and sisters gathered together on the Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon.

An epitome of the protracted proceedings resulted in a simplification of the problems facing Ecclesias in Australia. They were reduced to the following issues:

BRISBANE: The challenge to the doctrine of the Atonement set forth in the teaching of Bro. H. A. Twine, and the attitude of the Petrie Terrace (Brisbane) and Caloundra Ecclesias, in extending fellowship to him.

SYDNEY: The claim by Bro. W. R. Pearce to "speak in an unknown tongue" as a gift of God, and the attitude of the Shaftesbury Road (Sydney) Ecclesia as expressed in their "Final Statement."

It was acknowledged that the two doctrines in question (H. A. Twine in regard to the Atonement; and W. R. Pearce in regard to possession of the gift of an "unknown tongue") were false, and should be treated as matters of fellowship.

The problem, therefore, was reduced basically to two men and two ecclesias; and the solving of it must stem from the two centres thus affected.

The representatives of the Ecclesias affected in the Brisbane area (Redcliffe, Cooraroo and Wilston — and it will be recalled that the Central Standing Committee, sub-committee had confirmed that Bro. Twine was in error) were asked to express their minimum requirements. They gave them as:

1. The disfellowship of H. A. Twine;
2. The repudiation by the Petrie Terrace and Caloundra Ecclesias of the teaching of H. A. Twine;
3. The adoption by those Ecclesias of

the Unity Book propositions.

Representatives of several Sydney and NSW Ecclesias which have withdrawn from the Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia require:

1. **The disfellowship of W. R. Pearce so long as he maintains his claim to possess a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit;**
2. **The repudiation by the Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia of their attitude towards this teaching as expressed in their Final Statement.**

The two groups of Ecclesias in question were asked whether they were prepared to have the Central Standing Committee to negotiate to effect a settlement on those terms. Both refused any such service from that Committee. The Brisbane brethren maintained that the original recommendation of the CSC that Brother H. A. Twine be not received in fellowship, was rejected by the Petrie Terrace Ecclesia, and the subsequent delay and dissension had permitted false teaching to be extended. The representatives of the Sydney and NSW Ecclesias pointed out that the President and Secretary of the CSC were members of the very Ecclesia whose attitude towards the present possession of the Holy Spirit had precipitated the crisis in the Sydney area.

Following discussion upon these issues, a recommendation was submitted by the Cumberland Ecclesia. It read:

"Because of prevailing dissatisfaction of many ecclesias at the action of the Petrie Terrace (Brisbane) Ecclesia and the Caloundra Ecclesia in fellowshiping Brother H. Twine, and the attitude of the Shaftesbury Road Ecclesia towards the doctrine of the present possession of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, an appeal be directed to the Adelaide Ecclesia to respect the scruples of many local and interstate Ecclesias which are currently protesting against the action and attitude of the three Ecclesias mentioned above, by advising those three Ecclesias to abstain from attendance at the forthcoming Conference, thus clearing the way to making it possible for the protesting Ecclesias to co-operate at the Conference."

It should be clearly understood for

what the appeal is asking. It is not requesting Adelaide to disfellowship the Ecclesias concerned, for that is a matter that Adelaide has to decide for itself. All that it is asking is for the Arranging Brethren of the Adelaide Ecclesia to respect the scruples of hundreds of brethren who are deeply concerned over this matter, by advising the Ecclesias in question that the Conference is closed to them.

It is surely obvious to all that the claim to possess a miraculous gift of the Spirit is false; whilst the teaching of Brother Twine has been clearly demonstrated as erroneous. The Ecclesias concerned (Petrie Terrace, Caloundra, and Shaftesbury Road) have condoned the teaching of the errorists, so that Cumberland's request is perfectly reasonable.

Brethren in this country desire to meet the Editor of *The Christadelphian* in fraternal fellowship, and to enthusiastically co-operate in the meetings designed to that end; but this will not be practicable unless the appeal reported above is granted. On the other hand, if the appeal is ignored, it will mean that the Editor will be brought into fellowship with Ecclesias that have condoned false doctrine, that have clearly indicated their refusal to limit fellowship to those endorsing the Unity Basis, or with one that is not prepared to acknowledge that belief in the present possession of the miraculous gifts of the spirit today is a vital error requiring disfellowship.

He will be brought into fellowship with those who are openly fellowshiping the Unnamed group in the States and advocating that the division in that country is contrary to Scripture.

We do trust that the A.B. of the Adelaide Ecclesia will recognise the seriousness of this and will concede the request of the appeal. We are confident that the Truth in Australia and throughout the world will be helped by so doing; and certainly the wholehearted co-operation of brethren who are deeply concerned with these problems will be given to their efforts during the Conference. Let the principles of the Truth be maintained and personalities will likewise disappear.

EDITOR.



Thoughts For The Times

Communion with God

Communion with God is far more sacred than many are wont to think. The definite, stringent and awe-inspiring instructions as to the way in which Israel were to draw nigh to Him should cause man to reflect — to submit carefully and solemnly his reasoning in regard to worship to the test of the Holy Word. The natural mind is disposed to think that worship, if it is offered sincerely, must be acceptable, whether the worshipper be scripturally enlightened or not. This is a great error. Devotion and sincerity, like earnestness and zeal, are right in their places, but they must be governed by knowledge. It is a man's nature to worship; he cannot refrain from it. An indispensable condition to acceptable worship is fellowship with God. Fellowship involves right doctrine, and right practice. When united, these compose the "light" of 1 John 1:7, in which, if we walk, "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." The alien walk not in this light, and as a consequence lack the God-provided basis on which to offer acceptable prayer and praise. "The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon him, to all that call upon him *in truth*" (Ps. 145:18) "The prayer of the *upright* is his delight" (Prov. 15:8). Those whom God invites to approach Him in worship are those who hear and heed the gospel and its claims (Acts 17:30; 1 Tim. 2:4). To such, the words of the Psalmist are applicable: "Blessed is the man whom thou *choosest* and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in thy courts" (Ps. 65:4).