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Islip Collyer

Islip Collyer



Letters to
YOUNG CHRISTADELPHIANS

Islip Collyer

P R E F A C E

In this book we have collected the three letters written and published by Brother Islip Collyer for the young Christadelphians of England. While the contents are now more than fifty years old, the problems addressed by Brother Collyer are just as relevant to us as they were to the young people of his day. Brother Collyer was 60 years old when he wrote the first Letter but, as he says on pages 4 & 5, "It is quite possible...for an elder to sympathise with the young...With a keen memory of early days, and with a well-developed — perhaps even an over-developed — imagination, I can sympathise with the youngest. You must remember that, although you have never been my age, I have been yours...The difficulties of the present are no greater than those of the past: they have simply taken another form...it is extremely improbable that you have found any new intellectual or spiritual difficulties. They have been before of old time." The problems of developing and sustaining a real faith, while the world is constantly alluring us with glittering promises of wealth and success, or even simply pressuring us to conform to its own standards of 'respectability' — these problems are just as real today, for young and old alike.

The first Letter was published in May 1936. Brother Collyer writes that some young people doubt the quality of their personal faith. He examines the most likely reasons for a weak faith, and reviews the historical evidence for the Truth as we know it.

He concludes by exhorting young people not to let things slip, but to “hold to their ideals and at the same time be strong in faith.”

While the first Letter deals with the faith held by Christadelphians at large — First Principles — the second Letter looks at personal faith. It was published in 1937 as a sequel to the first Letter. “As a matter of cold demonstration from Scripture,” he writes, “the truth of the Gospel as we understand it is well established.” “The real difficulty...is in having real faith.” Brother Collyer looks at solid reasons for believing in God and His Word. He concludes with an exhortation to spend more time reading, insisting that “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

The third Letter was written a little later, in June 1939, under the looming darkness of World War 2. In March, the German armies had occupied all of Czechoslovakia, and Hitler had secretly decided to invade Poland. On September 1, three months after this letter was published, German troops smashed into Poland, and on September 3, Great Britain declared war. The shadow of these ominous developments hangs over this Letter, as Brother Collyer prepares the minds of his readers for the trials that are coming.

All in all, the three Letters make stimulating reading for all ages, as we might expect from the author of *Conviction and Conduct*, *The Guiding Light*, *Principles and Proverbs* and *Vox Dei*.

Footnotes have been added to help today’s reader, and to note significant references.

Many people have helped in the production of this book, and

we thank them all; especially Brother John Collyer, Brother Islip Collyer's nephew, for his ready assistance.

May this new edition stiffen the faith of a new generation.

The Committee of the
21ST AUSTRALASIAN CHRISTADELPHIAN YOUTH CONFERENCE

Adelaide, October 1991

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A LETTER

to YOUNG CHRISTADELPHIANS

Dear young Fellow Pilgrims,

This is to be a letter, not an article or essay. It is intended to give a little help if possible to a few hundred young people whom I know and love, and who may have some feeling of regard for me. It will be distinctly personal, and if to speak of one's own experience is egotism then it may be egotistical. This is almost inevitable in a letter. If circumstances should so rule that other letters shall follow, the effort will always be to make them sufficiently "open" that anyone who is interested may read, but sufficiently private for matters to be discussed beyond the range of any magazine.

I suppose most young people who know me will think of me as at least elderly, and many will place me with the old-fashioned Christadelphians with old-fashioned ideas, not in sympathy with modern ways. It is well over forty years since I first began to write for *The Christadelphian* and to lecture in the various ecclesias and so, no doubt, I do belong to a generation which is quickly passing away. It is quite possible, however, for an elder to sympathise with the young. As we grow older our memory of early days is keener, while the events of the present

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make less impression. With a keen memory of early days, and with a well-developed — perhaps even an over-developed — imagination, I can sympathise with the youngest.

You must remember that although you have never been my age, I have been yours. Everything has to be new in turn, and in turn it becomes old-fashioned, but human nature remains the same although the circumstances of life are continually changing. The difficulties of the present are no greater than those of the past: they have simply taken another form. You know how a man sometimes thinks that he has developed a new and peculiar malady¹ with symptoms totally unlike anything that anyone has hitherto experienced. He goes to a busy medical man and finds that the doctor has treated several exactly similar cases within the last few months. In the same way it is extremely improbable that you have found any new intellectual or spiritual difficulties. They have been before of old time.

Some young people, especially those who are unusually thoughtful, have doubts as to the quality of their faith. They do not feel that burning conviction and confidence which are so often expressed by older brethren. They do not feel any real desire for the Kingdom of God to come with its implication of judgment. Even if reason is satisfied that God has spoken, and they could elaborate an excellent argument to prove the basis of their faith, all the reasoning fails to bring a realisation of spiritual values. Their feelings do not come into line with the thoughts that we express in hymns and prayers. They may feel that their faith is so slender and unsatisfactory that it is almost hypocritical to

¹ Or, disease.

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make any profession of it. Sometimes they may suspect some of the elders of being less confident than their words would imply, for actions often indicate a failure to realise the presence of God.

This difficulty of bringing feeling into line with reason, and conduct into line with both, is as old as human nature. The faltering faith of a willing disciple is perfectly expressed in the words of the harassed father, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief."

There is nothing unusual in such weakness, nor is there any reason for despondency so long as there is a humble willingness to grow. There is a way of growth if young people are only willing to take it, for it is as true now as when the Apostle wrote the words, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Some other young people present a more difficult problem. It is possible that they lack humility as well as faith. They may be rather too conscious of their modern advantages, and unwilling to admit the possibility that any of the wisdom of the modern world that they have imbibed could possibly be foolishness with God. They perhaps think that a superior education has made faith more difficult, and yet with a weakening of conviction and a more tolerant view of differing creeds, there is a certain feeling of superiority.

Now I think it is quite true, as many have feared, that wider educational opportunities may tend to shake the foundation of our faith, but I am sure that many observers have mistaken the cause of the trouble. There is no evil in education *per se*.¹ Lack of

¹ *In itself.*

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faith is a negative, caused not by the presence of something spurious, but by the absence of something essential. Education, as the world understands it, is only dangerous because it may crowd out a knowledge of more important matters.

Imagine the son of an Indian Chief taken from his home in infancy and given the best education that civilisation could bestow. Imagine him then returning to his father's home with all the trappings of learning and refinement to face the perils of the Wild. He would be totally unfitted for such a life and, unless protected by "ignorant savages", he would die. Yet his failure would be not because he possessed much knowledge of many subjects, but because he lacked the essential knowledge of life. His father with rapid and confident steps could follow a trail when the son would not even see that a trail was there. The overturned stone, the crushed leaf and the bent twig must be seen in combination and in one comprehensive glance, or they remain unnoticed. Their significance cannot be explained piecemeal, and it can only be apprehended fully by one who has passed through the necessary training. Yet the ability to follow a trail where much is "concealed", the capacity to make a comprehensive survey of many pointers, "here a little and there a little," may be absolutely essential to life.

If I were asked to say whether I considered a scholastic training an advantage for young people, I would make the same answer, whether the idea was to equip them for ecclesial work or for the commercial world. Yes, it is an advantage, if certain evils can be avoided. I think that there are three principal dangers. First, if a youth is not endowed with a fair share of natural intel-

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ligence, an extended education may make him self-satisfied and supercilious. Such men are known and despised in the business world. A humble fool in office is a trial to his fellows, but a self-satisfied fool is far worse. Supposing, however, that a youth is too intelligent to be self-satisfied, there are still two dangers. He may fail to realise the necessity for equipping himself with the elementary knowledge which is essential to the particular business in which he is engaged. In such an event he fails through ignorance in spite of all his training. Finally, there is the danger that with his wider view and developed abilities, he may have so many interests in life that he cannot concentrate on that which is his living. Herein is the greatest danger of a higher education in making shipwreck either of business or of faith. With such a rich field of thought and with so many interests in life, elementary duties may be neglected. The feeble faith of youth may die, not because it has been roughly handled, but because it has not been handled at all.

It is obvious that Faith as we understand it involves a more thorough belief than is necessary to keep people attached to ordinary church or chapel. This statement is not an assumption of superiority for our religion, but the statement of a truth which would be true just the same even if our doctrine was wrong and our hopes altogether vain. Our faith still involves a certain separation which is irksome to the flesh. It still demands associations which we might prefer to avoid, and forbids, or almost forbids, some others which we might desire to seek. The severance from the world, however, is not nearly so clean as it was at one time, and herein lies a danger. You have sometimes heard older brethren deplore the fact that we as a body "are becoming too respect-

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able". You may perhaps have thought it a foolish remark, yet there is some reason in it. The fear of persecution may drive away poltroons¹ but it will only strengthen the determination of strong men. If then a body is subject to a measure of persecution, weaklings will be eliminated, strong ones will be made still stronger and all will have the advantage of a clear line of demarcation. In earlier days there was a strong element of persecution to face. One of the most saintly men I ever knew had to give up a most desirable situation with a princely salary, because he left the Church of England and became a Christadelphian. He not only endured such loss of money and position for his faith but he faced curses and violence in proclaiming the Gospel. Once he was struck by a stone because of his preaching and there is some reason to believe that his early death from cancer was at least in part due to this outrage.

It is quite possible that some of you now get through life without having to endure even a verbal stoning, and without suffering any pecuniary² loss for your faith. It may be that the influence of friends and the social pull is all in the direction of the Brotherhood. Almost inevitably, however, there will come a testing-time for you. Some friends will have died, others will have passed out of your life and other yet will have proved unsatisfactory. You may make progress in temporal things, thus opening up new social possibilities and bringing new friends. The pull may then be all the other way, and if your hold on the Faith is slight it will soon evaporate and, instead of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind", you will be conformed

¹ *Or, cowards.*

² *Or, monetary.*

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to this world, "the fashion of which passeth away."¹ In all this the danger is not in education or success in themselves but in the range of interests and attractions they bring to life, just as the university-trained young man may make a hopeless mess of business, not because his training made him less capable, but because it opened so many varied interests that he could not settle down to the necessary humdrum of work.

I know perfectly well that many doubts and difficulties arise in the minds of young people, not only with the children of brethren and sisters who have not yet made up their minds, but even with those who have taken the initial step in passing through the waters of baptism. Often these doubts and difficulties do not take definite shape. It would be much better if they did, for an open and expressed difficulty may be effectively answered, whereas if such doubts merely hover round the mind shapeless, and undefined, they put a serious check on spiritual growth without ever provoking a spiritual crisis. No doubt a steady growth is best of all, but a spiritual crisis is much better than stagnation and decay.

What is your particular difficulty, if you have one? Do you sometimes doubt whether our generally-accepted doctrines express the supreme truth of Christian revelation, as older brethren have supposed? Do you feel unable to cope with the objections raised by scientific men or by their much bolder satellites²? Do you sometimes even doubt the basis of the Christian religion, finding it difficult to believe that there can be any moral relationship between men and the Creator of the vast universe? Or is

¹ Romans 12:2

² *Or, Disciples.*

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your trouble simply the old healthy struggle of the Spirit against the flesh? Have you been repelled by the constant wrangling among brethren or by the sorry spectacle of noble professions going with base conduct? Are you merely depressed without knowing why? Do you find the meetings unattractive and the readings a bore? Are you allured by the world with its glittering possibilities for vigorous and capable youth, and is there a feeling of regret, possibly even of resentment, that you feel debarred from some of the positions which self-appreciation tells you might be yours? In short, is your faith strong enough to keep you from being conformed to this world, but not strong enough to effect that transformation which can make a Christian cheerful even when he suffers the loss of all things?

All these thoughts and many others may find a temporary lodgment in the minds of young disciples. Indeed, it is almost certain that all thoughtful young people will experience some of these difficulties in varying degree and at different times. I can sympathise with all such disciples, and I use the word sympathy in its proper meaning as "feeling with and fully understanding". Perhaps you can extend your sympathies in the same way to those who experience difficulties such as have never come to you personally. You will agree that the capacity to sympathise is the first qualification necessary if we are to give any help. The sturdy brother who "cannot see the slightest difficulty in that", is obviously not in a position to assist those who can.

First then let us make a brief review of the special claims of Christadelphians that they hold the One Faith of Christian

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revelation. I am confident that those of you who have done much reasoning out of the Scriptures in the effort to instruct others, will have no doubts as to the teaching of the Bible. Of course there are difficulties in this as in everything else, but if you have engaged in much discussion you will have no doubts as to the main facts. If you have ever been non-plussed in argument you have found the right answer afterwards if you could not at the time. Your only disappointments have been due to your feeling that you ought to be able to find a perfectly satisfactory explanation for every difficulty, and such perfection is not attainable. The most stalwart brethren we have ever known were men who came from outside with all their prejudices violently against Christadelphians, and every consideration of temporal interest and social pull assisting their prejudice. They have only yielded after a prolonged struggle when reason has compelled them to admit that the Bible message is unmistakable and — as Scripture indeed predicted — Christendom has gone astray. The main facts have often been admitted too by men whose prejudices were not engaged either in our favour or against us. A leading secularist some years ago held up a Bible in a public hall and said: "I don't believe this book, but I want no better weapon than this against the clergy." The same man said to my father on more than one occasion, "If the Bible is true, you have the truth, but I can't believe it."

There is, however, a more important fact to which I wish to direct your very particular attention. I think that the brethren have missed a great opportunity in failing to give it sufficient emphasis. I mean the fact that we present nothing new, even judging by secular history. We accept the Bible that the Church

has given us, we accept the translations the Church has made. If we need helps from scholarship we are quite content to rely upon the work of some of the clergy. The main doctrines we thus gather from Scripture have been recognised repeatedly by earnest students and then have been allowed to “slip” while pagan doctrines more alluring to the flesh have taken their place.

Do you remember the words of the late W E Gladstone,¹ the ‘Grand Old Man’, as he was called?

“Christian opinion came, I believe, to found itself upon an assumption due to the Greek philosophers and especially to Plato, i e, the immortality of the human soul, and this assumption, which I am not much inclined to accept, has supplied us with spectacles — so to speak — through which we look at the Hebrew ideas conveyed in the Scriptures.”

I quote from memory but I am sure that this is substantially accurate. Here Mr Gladstone toward the close of his life began to perceive a truth which you have been taught quite plainly. You will probably remember the names of several of the clergy who have got into trouble through speaking out in the same way. If you have conversed with religious teachers you may have heard the open confession that of course the Bible does teach that ours is a perishing race and that life is only through Christ. If you have made yourself acquainted with the literature of the Brotherhood you have read quotations from early reformers — men whose names are honoured by all Christians — but who expressed themselves quite definitely on this matter of human

¹ W E Gladstone (1809-1898) was three times a British Prime Minister and an important figure in the Church of England.

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mortality. Once, standing at a second-hand bookstall I found an old volume of Tyndale's writings, and turning the pages I discovered the famous passage in which the great reformer points out that if the souls of the dead were in Heaven they would be in as good a position as that of the angels and there would be no need for a resurrection. I have always regretted that I did not buy the volume. I saw it, however, at a time when coppers were very scarce.

If we turn to our conception of the Gospel, you only need to consult the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on 'The Millennium' and you will find that our doctrine of the Kingdom of God was a point of orthodoxy throughout the whole of the Western Church for the first three centuries of the Christian era. It was only discarded when the Church became strong, and closely allied to the State. If we take the subject of baptism the facts are even more remarkable, for the final repudiation of Apostolic teaching comes so much nearer to our own times. Some of you perhaps have read the article by the late Dean Stanley which has often been quoted by brethren, but as some readers may not be familiar with this candid and scholarly confession I will quote a few passages.

"For the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament and which is the very meaning of the word — that those who were baptised were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water.

'The practice of immersion, apostolic and primitive as it was, was peculiarly suitable to the Southern and Eastern countries for which it was designed, and peculiarly unsuitable to the tastes, the convenience and the feelings of the countries of the North and West.

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'Baptism by sprinkling was rejected by the whole ancient Church (except in the rare cases of death-beds or extreme necessity) as no baptism at all.

'It is a greater change even than that which the Roman Catholic Church has made in the administering of the Lord's supper in the bread without the wine. For that was a change which did not affect the thing that was signified, whereas the change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism and has altered the very meaning of the word.

'Such are some of the general reflections suggested by the revolutions through which the oldest ordinance of the Church has come down to our day. They may possibly make that ordinance more intelligible both to those who adopt and those who have not adopted it. They may also serve to show in one instance the transformations both of letter and spirit which have taken place in many other examples.'

The last passage quoted is significant. It is quite true that such changes in favour of human taste, feeling and convenience have taken place in many other doctrines.

The Apostle pleaded with disciples to "give the more earnest heed" to the things they had heard lest at any time they should let them slip (Hebrews 2:1). Within two-and-a-half centuries of his time they let slip the good news of the Kingdom. At about the same time and through the same influences they let slip the unpalatable truth of our mortality in favour of the flattering doctrines of Plato. The Scriptural revelation of God-Manifestation, the Father manifesting Himself in the Son as the beginning of a new creation, was discarded, and the doctrine of the Trinity

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established by vote. Apostolic baptism was more gradually changed, first making infants the subjects instead of adults, and finally making the sprinkling of a few drops of water on the face a substitute for the ancient bath. The last stage of this change was only a few centuries ago. Finally in our own time we are witnessing a "letting slip" of the very foundation. In its articles¹ the Church still proclaims that the "Holy Scripture containeth all that is necessary for faith, so that a man shall not be called upon to believe anything that is not taught therein." You know, however, that there is a very strong tendency at the present time to repudiate even this foundation. It is a natural result of the earlier errors, for with so much of the Christian message rejected the rest becomes unintelligible, just as it would be impossible to fit the pieces of a puzzle together after half of them had been thrown away.

Some of your older brethren are moved by a great conviction which seems to be burnt into their very personalities, that ours is a perishing race. They regard the offer of Life as a miracle of divine grace and mercy. They believe absolutely the words of the Lord Jesus that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."² They remember the words of the Apostle, when, drawing a lesson from the past, he asked, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?": and his exhortation to "give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1).

¹ The Thirty-Nine Articles are the Church of England's statement of faith.

² John 3:16.

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They look back on history and see that the doctrines of Christ have been allowed to slip, one after the other. They are horrified at the presumption of men who claim to change the ordinances of God at the dictates of human taste and convenience. They are astonished at the manner in which men assume absolute rights over the lower creatures and yet in effect deny that God can so make use of us, saving that which is pleasing, and destroying the worthless. They realise the truth expressed in Scripture that "God only hath immortality",¹ and thus the "gift" of eternal life involves the gift of the divine nature. Realising these truths and knowing how little they appeal to the flesh, your older brethren fear that history may repeat itself. They fear that the Truth won through hard struggle and much pain may again be allowed to "slip", and that when Christ comes according to His promise He may indeed find a faithless world.

It is just because I have a better opinion of the rising generation than some other elders that I am writing this letter. I believe that we have many young people in our midst who are not only better educated than their fathers in the things of the world, but they also have a better standard of Christian conduct. If only they can hold to their ideals and at the same time be strong in faith, the rising generation may accomplish much. It is possible for enduring strength to be combined with the "meekness and gentleness of Christ".

If I can be of just a little help to the young men and women on whom the full load of ecclesial work will presently fall, I feel that this is the best work that I can undertake in the last decade of our

¹ 1 Timothy 6:16.

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allotted span of life. It is with a desire to "strengthen the things that remain" that I write this letter.

Your fellow pilgrim,

ISLIP COLLYER.

A SECOND LETTER

to YOUNG CHRISTADELPHIANS

My dear young Fellow Pilgrims,

My former letter has called forth some interesting comments and a few useful suggestions. One Recording Brother expressed a whole volume in a single sentence when he said that it was such a relief to find that the letter was not controversial! I think that others in a similar position will sympathise. A sister suggested that the letter required too much concentration of thought to be read widely in these days, which I suppose was a gentle and sisterly way of saying that it was dull. My brother remarked that having made a preliminary apology for any personal touches which would appear, I might have introduced a few. No doubt it would be possible to relate incidents which would be interesting, and I would much sooner tell you amusing stories of early days than air a crotchet after the manner of many who rush into print. I am determined, however, not to relate anything unless there seems to be a lesson in it, for we are living in serious times.

One correspondent desired me to deal with personal habits in which some of the brethren, both young and old, follow an

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undesirable Gentile lead. Another asked me to concentrate on matters of social life and the terrible danger of Gentile companions leading young people to spiritual suicide.

I think, however, that the entire field is covered by the suggestion of another brother who like many young people of the rising generation has the scientific type of mind. The real difficulty, he says, is in having real faith. As a matter of cold demonstration from Scripture, the truth of the Gospel as we understand it is well established. In these days there is hardly any pretence of reconciling the Bible with anything else. Intelligent and well-instructed young people will not take exception to any of our main tenets if they are fully convinced that the foundation is sound. But how can we believe wholeheartedly in a personal God who sent His Son to earth when we begin to realise how vast is the universe? And if we believe, how can we bring the fact so thoroughly home to our imaginations that it will at all times rule our lives? Faith is the real difficulty.

I am sure that this judgment is correct. Faith always has been the difficulty. It is written of the ancient Israelites that the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. The generation which witnessed the first appearance of Christ was described as faithless, and even the late disciples were reproved as "O ye of little faith".

There are many degrees of belief, from a slight ~~whim~~ ^{whim of} opinion to a burning conviction. Faith means something more than belief, for it surely implies interest. Belief, and a strong desire may blend into faith, and then it becomes a "the heart unto righteousness". If we have full f

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Christadelphians God will at all times seem near to us; we shall not even desire to go with the world; we shall always remember the injunction not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but to exhort each other "so much the more as we see the day approaching". A full faith in the power of Christ will make us less critical of others and more critical of ourselves. When we think of speaking or writing we shall ask ourselves the question whether our labours are so definitely for the Lord's sake that we would continue in them right to the day of his coming, or whether we are indulging a natural but harmful passion for self-expression. In short, a real and living faith would cut out all worldly ways, all personal disputing and bitterness, and nine-tenths of the controversial pamphlets.

Now this is a scientific age, and I think there is a peculiar difficulty experienced by men of the scientific type of mind. They cannot implement their beliefs by an emotional uplift to produce a real and living faith. They want very satisfactory proofs for everything, and with a cultivated parsimony¹ will only yield assent as the evidence plainly demands it. If they are entirely of the scientific type I do not think that they ever see quite all the evidence even of the kind that will stand the test. It needs a certain quality of poetic vision to see the complete picture. A piecemeal presentation is a very poor substitute.

If, however, the scientific type of mind lacks somewhat of spiritual glow, there are compensations in the fact that it is free

¹ 'Parsimony' means, essentially, 'stinginess'. By "a cultivated parsimony" Brother Collyer means, "They have trained their minds to accept only the most compelling evidence, and to discard everything else."

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from fanaticism. The scientific type of Christadelphian may not have the enthusiastic driving force which builds ecclesias, but he is also without the ill-balanced passion which wrecks them. He is usually too logical and sincere to use ecclesial relationships as men use "the game of politics". The world of science is so interesting and so vast that petty disputes are contemptible. Nothing would call him to our standard but a belief that Christ is a living reality, and if he ever feels serious doubts as to this great fact, he at least realises what it means a great deal better than some who never confess to any doubts at all.

Now as this is a scientific age it is interesting to raise the question whether our foundations are such as should satisfy the scientific mind or at least equip it with such a rational basis as to justify the lifetime of service involved in the final experiment.¹

This perhaps is putting the matter crudely, but it is quite possible for faith to grow even if it begins on no better basis than this. I think there is such a scientific basis. We have a conception of divine purpose — a theory, if scientists should insist on the word — which harmonises with all the known facts. It is supported by a great mass of collateral² evidence which is often made only stronger by the efforts of men to explain it away. It has been progressively confirmed by the events of history right up to the days in which we are living. There remains only the

¹ That is to say, "Should our fundamental beliefs have to be capable of scientific analysis? Or, perhaps, should they at least form a basis logical enough to justify devoting our whole lifetime to finding out whether these beliefs are right or not?"

² Or, parallel.

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final confirmation of a divine consummation, and we cannot hope to see this final demonstration unless we play our part faithfully now. There is surely an amply sufficient basis to justify a scientist in making the final test even if he is so dominated by a thirst for knowledge that personal ambition plays no part in the matter! If he makes such a decision and acts upon it, his study of the Word will give him faith.

Faith has always been put to rather severe test, but there has always been a rational foundation for it in all the divine dealings with mankind. Abraham, the father of the faithful, received a promise which seemed hopeless even when it was first made. Then he had to wait for many years before there was a beginning of realisation in the birth of the promised son. Abraham received occasional visits from supermen; he accepted them as the messengers of God, and he did not allow the intervals of divine silence to destroy his confidence. Perhaps the best approach to faith for the modern scientific mind would be along the same course. For the moment leave out of account all speculations as to the Creator and His infinite power. Just contemplate the possibility of a race of beings as superior to us as we are to mice, looking down on the "schemes of men", and sometimes intervening. Surely it would not be scientific to deny the possibility of such beings existing or even to harbour an inveterate prejudice against such an idea. There is life almost everywhere around us although quite naturally we are only able to make a critical examination of life which is inferior to our own. The vast majority of creatures on this earth are quite unconscious of the existence of man. If an inhabitant of the deep sea had the power of reason it might naturally deem it impossible that there should

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be any life out of water. We with our human powers of thought ought not to be so narrowly prejudiced. There must be something in space, for even at this moment it is full of messages which would become intelligible if I had the right instrument for receiving them. How narrow-minded and foolish it would be to affirm that there can be no life and intelligence apart from association with earth and water!

There should not be the slightest scientific prejudice against the idea that angels exist. It should be regarded as purely a matter of evidence. If it is proved that there are such beings it seems reasonable to follow the example of Abraham in believing their testimony.

Now everyone who is acquainted with the facts will acknowledge that there is very good evidence of the truth of the Scriptures and of the existence of angels. Scientists have sometimes formed opinions on the basis of far less evidence and have devoted their lives to experimental tests in a search for final proof. It seems to me that if any such prolonged study is worth while, the search for life must be supremely so, for all our work depends on life, and death is merely negative.

Perhaps a reference to personal experience may be of some help in securing the right foundation for faith. When I was a boy my only serious mental difficulty was in this matter of faith. Our main doctrines based on an acceptance of the whole Bible were too plain to be doubted. Contact with men who tried to reconcile the Scriptures with any other belief only confirmed my acceptance of Christadelphian teaching. Inevitably, however, the question arose, "Is it all true, or are these writings the work of mis-

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guided men?" In my early days there was a very strong revolt against religion led by such men as Charles Bradlaugh.¹ Scientists too were playing the part of wreckers, although the attack on religion was only incidental to their work. Darwin led naturally to Haeckel with his complete denial of God and his scorn for all who were still ignorant enough to be Christians. It seemed that the most capable of men living were thorough materialists², far more than scientists are now, and expressing themselves with much more confidence.

I read a number of debates on the Scriptures and found them all unsatisfactory, as indeed I might have expected had I not been so young and inexperienced. Some of them, such as Bradlaugh versus Grant, were entertaining, but most unedifying. Others were desultory and inconclusive. Nevertheless it was a debate which first put me on the line of study which produced full satisfaction. It was not a discussion as to the authority of the Bible but the debate between Brother Roberts and a Jew as to the claims of Jesus.³ For the first time I realised the full significance of the fact that the Old Testament has come down to us through two hostile lines guarding its integrity through the ages. It was originally written by Jews, for Jews, and it has been preserved and guarded by Jews. From the point of view of either

¹ Charles Bradlaugh was the first atheist Member of the British Parliament. His debate with Robert Roberts has been recently published by the Christadelphian Scripture Study Service.

² Materialists believe that everything we see around us can be described in everyday terms: they do not believe in anything supernatural.

³ This has recently been published in the same volume as the debate with Bradlaugh.

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Jew or sceptic there can be no reference to Jesus in the Old Testament. I can remember soon after this getting into conversation with a young agnostic in a railway carriage. He claimed to be a trained logician and he thought that he was an unbeliever for that reason. I put this point to him regarding the Old Testament and the claims of Jesus. He fully admitted the logic of my premises and then, as often happens in train journeys, we had to part before I could develop the logical conclusion. But even if we could have continued the discussion for a week I could not have presented the matter to him as it appeared to me. You no doubt are familiar with this line of thought for the argument has been used many times during the last forty years. I was about sixteen when I read the discussion and the Jewish point of view was new to me. If any of you have as good and as ready a recollection of Scripture as I had, you can form some idea of the effect of this discovery. It was not the force of any single prophecy which so appealed to me, strong as some of the individual testimonies are. It was the entire scheme of sacred Scripture, progressively revealing a divine purpose, concealed from both the writers and the custodians of the Word. I saw the message as a whole and the idea of dismissing it as coincidence seemed as mad as if an utterly unmusical man had tried to tell me that the *Eroica*¹ symphony was a chance collection of notes written by one who had no idea how it would sound.

It may be suggested that the prejudice born of early training may have played a large part in forming this conception of the prophetic message. I am sure, however, that if there was preju-

¹ Beethoven's *Symphony no. 3 in E-flat minor*.

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dice it was formed on a basis of reason. It is possible to be logical even after definite opinions have been formed. I have heard arguments for our position which would not stand the test, and I have heard arguments against, which were logical as far as they went. In dealing with the Messianic prophecies, however, the enemy has been utterly at fault in his premises and often perverse in his reasoning.

In the debate which so interested me, when it was suggested that the prophecy of Daniel predicted an early appearance of the Messiah in weakness, the Jew at first with scornful confidence expressed his willingness to accept the testimony of Daniel, but later when the argument had been developed he expressed the opinion that Daniel was mad! His treatment of other prophecies was no better, nor have I found in later days any more reasonable method, although I have been so interested in the Messianic prophecies that I have carefully sought for the answers of both Jews and sceptics.

Tom Paine professed to deal with the subject many years ago,¹ but he evidently had not even begun to understand it, and he did not mention a single passage which we should call in evidence. Many unbelievers of later days have touched upon the subject but nearly always have been content to quote an ugly context, on the assumption (unfortunately often justified) that Christians would cease to be interested in any prophecy if it contained something they did not like.

¹ Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was a famous English philosopher, who opposed autocratic governments. He wrote *The Rights of Man*. He was not an atheist, but he did challenge established religion. His pamphlets influenced the American Revolution.

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It has been urged that Zechariah 12 cannot possibly refer to the Second Coming of Jesus because the whole connection of ideas has to do with a terrible war in the Holy Land! Shades of Armageddon! What an argument! Psalm 110 cannot refer to Jesus because it speaks of filling the valleys with dead bodies! "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin" in Isaiah 53 cannot mean Jesus, because it was "his body that was offered, not his soul". What almost unbelievable ignorance on the part of both those who use and those who are influenced by such arguments! But however good your understanding of these matters, do not be scornful or puffed up. God has revealed and God has concealed, and when men have been rebellious God has sometimes chosen their delusions. That is the only possible explanation of some criticisms of Scripture.

Another incident which stands out strongly in my recollection of early days was when I succeeded in obtaining a copy of Mede's *Key to Revelation*, printed in 1643. It had always seemed possible for the scornful to suggest that our understanding of Apocalyptic symbols had been moulded by the events of history and that we were self-deceived in our application of John's vision to latter-day events. Mede's work provided such a crushing answer to this objection, for he looked forward where we look back, and in connection with some of the most remarkable of latter-day events, such as the drying up of the Turkish power, the gathering again of the Jews to their land and the concurrent "*horrible and unheard-of preparation for warre*", there was nothing either in his time or for a hundred years after to suggest such developments to a political observer.

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Again it was not a single argument which so impressed me, but the emphatic confirmation of a system of interpretation which cast the light of prophecy all through history. Since my early days there have been several important developments such as the British position in Palestine and the development of warfare in the air, all fitting in with the prophetic scheme, but developing so gradually and so naturally that it is possible even for those who have been partly instructed to be heedless and unbelieving.

Since those early days I have always been inclined to group the evidence for our foundation under the following heads.

- 1 The uprise of Christianity and the direct evidence of Christ's resurrection, taking particular note of that which has been conceded either openly or tacitly by men who do not believe.
- 2 The Jews as God's witnesses, their literature and their history.
- 3 The Messianic prophecies as they impinge on these broad facts.
- 4 The outline of history as foretold in the Old Testament.
- 5 The special outline in the book of Revelation.
- 6 Incidental harmonies and allegories, hints and shadows, fitting in with the main facts and providing an almost inexhaustible field for continual discovery.

I have always insisted that it is the cumulative force of this evidence which proves so satisfactory, and you cannot secure the

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full benefit of this unless you have all the facts so definitely in mind that the whole can be seen in a single mental glance. In this as with so many other matters you cannot see the full force of any part unless you see it in relation to the whole.

If a man in America or Australia were given the address of my home — 25 Red Lane, Kenilworth, England — he could come and find the house with unerring ease. Forgetfulness of any part of the address would lead to failure. If he forgot all but the figures 2 and 5, and put them in the wrong order, he would be nearly as ill equipped as are the majority of people in their approach to the Bible.

You might do well to remember this simple illustration. Memory is faulty, especially with things that are out of sight. A little forgetfulness may tend to render the vision dim. It then loses some of its appeal, and one may get into the vicious circle called by the apostle "an evil heart of unbelief". If, however, we learn our lessons thoroughly and then "keep in memory the things we have learned", we shall agree that we have such a solid foundation for our confidence that there is every reason to devote a lifetime to the progressive work of faith, hoping for a final demonstration more conclusive and infinitely more valuable than anything ever proved in the laboratories of science.

For these reasons I give this earnest advice. Read regularly from all parts of the Word, if not according to the accepted scheme of daily readings, then on some other plan which shall be thorough. By so doing you will keep in memory the truths you have learned and at the same time will increase your store of knowledge and your confidence, for it is absolutely true that

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“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Attend the meetings of the brethren as regularly as possible. The meeting on the first day of the week for the breaking of bread is the most important for it is our meeting with Christ; we should always desire to be there. We should be present at the public proclamations of the Gospel, not because we desire to hear a lecture but because it is our work no less than that of the one who for the moment is our spokesman. Other meetings should claim our attention unless there is definitely something better or more urgent for us to do, for they are certainly of some positive help, better than that which is merely negative. Even though few of the brethren attract us, even if some in our meeting repel us, we should never on that account neglect the duty of assembly. The clash and friction of different personalities is part of our training. Our faith in a living Christ is tested by our contact with men who on a worldly basis could never be our friends. Sometimes, however, a fellowship born of duty leads to a friendship better than any the world could ever offer.

If there is agreement as there should be in your home, perhaps the best of all exercise can be found there. It is good for a husband to read aloud to his wife and family, especially if he makes a wise choice of books. It is good to have the experience of settling inevitable differences of opinion in the wise discussions which are ruled by love. From the home the lesson may be extended until it may perhaps be possible for brethren to be wise even in ecclesial differences. If it is a pleasure to yield and only a duty to insist there will be very few serious disputes. This matter of reading in the home is worthy of very careful thought. The claim, “I have no time for reading,” is never really true, for

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everyone wastes time, and most people read at least something every day. The truth is that the modern man has so many interests in life that he can rarely settle down to serious study. Even newspaper articles have to be short or they are unread.

When, however, young people desire to qualify for special positions in life they can tackle the most serious and difficult of works even now. They can find time then to read and master the best that has been written on their chosen subject. If they desire to qualify for the Kingdom of God they should be equally logical and determined in this. My advice to you all is in the words of the apostle, "Give attention to reading." The reading of Scripture first of all, then the reading of the best works of exposition. Much can be accomplished by a little study every day, and without any great strain you might be able to roll away the reproach that the majority of young Christadelphians have never read the books that opened the way for them.

With this matter of reading I would link the subject of prayer. Do not be afraid of making either reading or prayer a matter of habit. It is true that a mere habit is of little value, but even that is better than nothing and it is certain that if you do not cultivate the good habit of attention, the bad habit of neglect will come without effort. A good habit may easily be made into something more than habit: always without it you will have something less, it may even be "the little less and what miles away".

You young people are ready for ecclesial responsibilities at a more difficult time, perhaps, than any we have experienced hitherto. You will need faith and more courage if the times of the Gentiles are to continue much longer. You will need patience and

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forbearance, for this is an age of frayed nerves and human nature is just as weak and faulty as the Bible tells us. Yet in the very work of strong self-repression in helping to bear the infirmities of the weak, you will develop yourselves. Your faith in God and His Word will wax stronger as your faith in humanity wanes.

You will need vision, too, for "where there is no vision the people perish". Perhaps a special dispensation of Providence will supply such necessary help for the end of the Age, for it is written concerning the last days that "the young men shall see visions and old men will dream dreams".¹

With all good wishes for your welfare now and ever.

I am your brother in the Hope of Israel,

ISLIP COLLYER.

¹ Joel 2:32.

A THIRD LETTER

to YOUNG CHRISTADELPHIANS

My dear young Fellow Pilgrims,

In various parts of the country I have been met with the question: "When are you going to write another letter?" Now certain communications through the post present the same urge. In response I take up my pen to write a message which shall be printed and so reach many readers, but which nevertheless shall be a letter with a personal touch impossible in more formal writing.

In my former letters I urged the apostolic exhortation, "Give attention to reading." I would like if possible to emphasise this matter still more. Read the Scriptures and also those standard works which help our study of the sacred writings. If some of you have an upheaval in life and have to leave home, the need for such reading will be greater than ever. Get some books of your own and read systematically, forcing yourself to get through a minimum number of pages each week. A most appropriate book for the present distress¹ is *The Ways of Providence*. I read this twice while I was in my teens and I would like to read it again in the new edition which is the finest bit of printing we

¹ The buildup to World War 2.

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have ever produced. Another acceptable work is the recently produced exposition of the letter to the Hebrews by brother Carter. This also is beautifully printed. If brethren who are exiled by circumstance get a few of such books and read them thoroughly, their banishment may prove one of the greatest of blessings. If some young men complain that in impending upheavals money will be scarce, I have to tell them that there is now an organisation to help in the purchase of books where help is needed, bringing such books within the reach of any serious student.¹

You young brethren are facing a test which may be decisive as to whether you are fit for the Kingdom of God. It may be that some of the eleventh-hour labourers will be subject to a trial, short but sharp while it lasts, giving a test of moral courage instead of prolonged toil. I write especially to you.

About fifty years ago some of the brethren approached a prominent member of Parliament setting forth their position regarding the bearing of arms. He replied that their fears were baseless; there would never be conscription in this country! We did not believe him and some of us lived to see the conscription of men up to fifty years of age in the Great War (the war which was to end war!). Now we have lived to see the introduction of conscription in time of peace. We are not in the least degree surprised.

¹ A note to the second Letter stated, "The printing charges of this second letter are being defrayed from the Constructive Work Fund of which the writer is secretary. The cost is about one penny per copy. All payments or contributions will go into the fund, which is used for helping with special efforts or in assisting students to buy good books."

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Since the beginning of those signs of the latter days which induced the brethren of sixty years ago to anticipate conscription, we have witnessed an extraordinary development. The Euphratean power progressively dried up in the districts affected by the prophecy until the Turks were driven out of Palestine, the principal object of the sixth vial. This event, incomparably the greatest event of our life-time, happened in the Turkish year 1335! The Turks then came into line with Western ways so that 1335 was the end of the days on the old calendar. Readers who know their Bible have no need for me to point out the extraordinary significance of this date.¹

We older brethren had watched the gradual forcing of Britain into the latter-day position assigned for her. We witnessed the occupation of Egypt, "induced by force of circumstances," as was anticipated, and finally the British position in Palestine, expected by the brethren for seventy years. We have seen something more than a "shaking of dry bones", in the house of Israel. There has been a remarkable development in which Jerusalem has become "a burdensome stone" to Great Britain. We have witnessed the horrible preparation for war which was to be associated with these events under the sixth vial and now there are at least unmistakable portents of the seventh vial, "wrath poured out into the air," and a terrible plague of "hailstones" falling upon men. As for the words of Christ describing the conditions which would prevail in the earth just before His Second Coming, modern political speakers often use His very words, sometimes

¹ For those who cannot think of the passage to which Brother Collyer refers, try Daniel 12:12!

LETTERS TO YOUNG CHRISTADELPHIANS

apparently unaware of what they are quoting. At the same time, with all these things before us, there comes the fulfilment of another prophecy perhaps the most startling of all. When a Hebrew prophet spoke of Israel's restoration one would expect to find a note of joy and a description of radiant happiness. In the thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah there is a plain prophecy of restoration, but the associated ideas are the very reverse of all that men would have expected; men with hands on loins as if in extreme pain, faces pale. A great day, we are told, so that none is like it; it is even the day of Jacob's trouble, out of which he shall be delivered.

Let us proclaim to all who will pay any heed to us that we regard these events as a final demonstration of our belief. Christ is a living reality, the Gentile times are hastening to their close, Christ is coming as He promised to come, in power and glory. He will tear to pieces the miserable fabric of human government. "In righteousness He will judge and make war." He will "send His angels and gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend", and destroy them. Then the righteous will shine forth in the Kingdom of their Father, for the Kingdom for which Christ taught His disciples to pray will have come and the will of God will be done on earth even as it is done in Heaven.

In the meantime Christ's disciples are under the explicit command to sheathe the sword, for all who take the sword will perish with it. The instruction was not only given to Peter at the hour of supreme need, it was repeated in the last message in a prophecy concerning a terrible time of trial for all disciples. "He that leadeth into captivity must go into captivity, he that killeth

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with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints."¹ Some saints were faithful in those hard times without much evidence of God ruling in the kingdoms of men. We in our day, with such accumulating evidence of impending judgment, should not only be poltroons² if we gave way to gentile clamour, we should be utter fools as well. Better a thousand times to be imprisoned, shot or burned at the stake than be unfaithful, with Christ at the door.

Perhaps some readers may think that in writing thus I am inviting prosecution as urging young men to keep out of the army. Well, if this should meet the eye of a man in authority, I would say, "Sir, please read a few pages, for I am sure that I can convince you that Christadelphians are no menace to the State, and I can show you who are the real enemies. We constitute no menace because our doctrine would never be popular. A candidate for our fellowship must do an amount of scriptural reading the very thought of which would be painful to most young men. A course of study, and examination of knowledge, a public ceremonial immersion in water, and then "newness of life" with inevitable restrictions most galling to the flesh in these pleasure-loving days. At the best we can only hope to get a few thousand from the millions in the land. Our members are good workers and as they take no part whatever in politics they are never found among the agitators and scheming rebels who are such a nuisance to the authorities."

There is a far greater menace to the State from bishops and

¹ Revelation 13:10

² Or, cowards.

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parsons and half-hearted Christian moralists who try to make a compromise between strict Christian ethics and British imperialism! There are, of course, many rules of Christian conduct which are recognised by all moralists and which are perhaps better observed by the British than by any other people, such rules as accompany truth, justice and mercy — a mercy which can best be shown by those who are very strong. There are other rules which were never intended for the governing of an empire, but for the disciplining and testing of men who were “called out from the world” in preparation for a world to come. The observance of these rules might easily lead to the loss of all things, even of life itself. Christ always contemplated His disciples as a feeble and persecuted minority during the “times of the Gentiles”; He said that only few would take the narrow way to the life He offered. In speaking of his second advent He raised the question: “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on earth?”, showing that He did not anticipate the development of faithful nations. To the few disciples, taken out from among the nations and passing through their course of severe training, He gave the instruction that if smitten on the one cheek they should offer the other rather than retaliate; if coat should be taken from them they should let the enemy have cloak as well. Do not avenge yourselves, return good for evil, if they persecute you in one city flee to another!

How grotesquely absurd to suppose that an empire could be run on such lines! The instruction was never intended for the rulers of the earth, but for feeble men who would be arraigned before such rulers and perhaps condemned to death by them. He said, “The time will come that men will slay you and think that

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they do God service,"¹ but He also promised that those who overcome in the time of severe trial will be given "power over the nations" in the world that is to come. Then they will "rule with a rod of iron", and if necessary dash rebels "in pieces like a potter's vessel".² If some Christians think that the time has already come for them to rule, let them rule properly and not cramp themselves by remembering restrictions which only belonged to the time of preparation. As for Christadelphians, they think — in fact they know — that the time has not come for Christians to rule. God "visited the nations to take out from among them a people for His name".³ They have to come out from the world and be separate, and if their separation enrages their fellows they have to suffer. They will never be such a danger to the nation, however, as the many well-meaning, but hopelessly illogical, apostles of compromise.

Christ never suggested that the policy of non-resistance was the way to success as men understand the word. It may probably lead to ignominy and death as it did with the Master Himself. He stated the rule of success for those who choose the present life and whose kingdom is of this world. "When a strong man armed and guards his house his goods are in peace, until a stronger than he cometh...". That is the rule of the jungle and the rule of human life. If a nation has great possessions and desires to keep them in peace the way is to be so strongly armed that no one will venture to attack. Christ said so and it is obviously true.

¹ John 16:2.

² Revelation 2:26-27.

³ Acts 15:14.

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Britain with great possessions has attempted to compromise and it has brought her to the verge of disaster. Men with great influence have suggested that the proper way to prevent war is to be unprepared! They do not say, "Let us be completely unarmed and let our enemies take whatever of our possessions they like." They are not prepared to follow Christ to the point of national crucifixion and death. They say in effect that we may try to guard our goods but we must not be strong so as to guard them well; we may hit the enemy enough to enrage him but not enough to destroy. Such a compromise is neither Christianity nor common sense.

Decide whether your kingdom is of this world or not. If you are going to follow Christ thoroughly you must only be a stranger and pilgrim in the earth, "having here no continuing city but seeking one to come."¹ You must not seek martyrdom. Christians have sometimes fallen into this error but it is contrary to the command of Christ. He said, "If they persecute you in one city flee to another."² Escape from persecution if you can, but if there is no way of escape, endure even as Christ endured.

On the other hand, if you decide that you cannot follow Christ in this thorough manner, or if you think that the Kingdom of God is to be made by the power of man and the time has already come for Christians to rule, then do not attempt to compromise. Use the iron rod and if necessary break the potsherds in pieces. The half-hearted measures of defence, the "frank unpreparedness" recommended by many compromising British preachers is

¹ Hebrews 13:14.

² Matthew 10:23.

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the sure way to lose the empire, and yet no passport to the Kingdom of God. It is the lukewarmness of Laodicea and more hated by the Spirit than the coldness of negation.

There is another harmful compromise which I would like to point out to those in authority. It is fostered by the foolish talk about a man giving his life for his country. The country does not want men to give their lives for it. If a young soldier went out and was killed by the first shot fired in a war, he would have done nothing for his country. He would have taken money for training and equipment and have given nothing in return. Not his fault, of course, but his misfortune. The country does not want men to go out and die for it but to go out and kill, a very different matter. And in modern war a man must not be particular whom he kills or how he does it so long as those who suffer are of the enemy race.

It may be that very few soldiers in the last war tried to avoid killing, but I know that there were some. They took risks like other soldiers, but they went out with the settled determination that they would not kill anyone if they could possibly help it. What in the world was the use of such men as soldiers? How much better if they had shown the moral courage to say, "I am not afraid to die but I am afraid to kill, therefore deal with me as you think right, but do not spend money trying to make me into a part of the killing machine." It is probable that for every one who definitely tried to avoid his military obligations, there were thousands who were made half-hearted by confused and compromising teaching.

Again I say the menace to the State is not in the few who take

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a firm stand and accept all the odium and reproach, but in the many who try to compromise. Such compromise is the sure way of losing both this world and the next.

It may be that in the tribunals which will try our young men there will be a repetition of the perfectly absurd questions asked during the Great War. "What would you do if you found a German attacking your mother or your wife?" We none of us know what we should do in such an extreme, but we may at least be certain of one fact: if we found a man attacking wife or mother we should not inquire as to his nationality! We should not say, "Excuse me, but before you deliver another blow will you tell me whether our nations are at war so that I may know how to treat you?"

In civil life what is the proper course to take in such an emergency? Is it right for a man to take the law into his own hands? I have an idea that an English judge would say that the proper attitude would be that of the ideal policeman who said, "I use force but not violence." We ought to stop, or attempt to stop the attack on our family with the use of as little violence as possible. If in such a test a man forgot all the rules and knocked out the brains of the assailant he would have to take his trial for manslaughter. Probably an English judge would take cognisance of the extreme provocation and be merciful, and possibly Christ would be merciful too. If, however, a man conducted his private quarrel after the manner of a war, if he said, "I thought that a certain man was going to attack me so I went out and shot his brothers," such a man would receive no mercy from an English judge and neither need he expect any from the judge of all the earth.

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Now I come to the more difficult matter of the work in which you should engage. I have no hesitation in saying, keep as far away from war work as you possibly can. This for two excellent reasons. Such work may be offensive to Christ and it may be prejudicial to the position, not only of the worker himself, but of his brethren. I sympathise with those who are entangled in the meshes of war preparation and cannot see the need for such a sacrifice as might be involved in cutting clear. To show my sympathy I will try to put their case rather better than it has ever been stated before. So possibly if a man in authority chances to read he may understand your position as such men have not understood in the past.

Christadelphians are not pacifists. We do not think that war is always wrong. We do not condemn the nation for preparing or for fighting. If your kingdom is of this world it may be necessary to fight for it. We refuse to fight simply because for the moment we have been forbidden by the One to whom the whole earth belongs. Now if the commander of an army gave instructions to some of the soldiers to lay down their arms, to engage in certain work and not to fight until he gave them further orders, they would obey. The reproaches or jeers of men who were completely ignorant of the commander's plan would not move them in the least degree. They might sympathise with the fighting men, however, and desire to help them in any way legitimate. Perhaps some brethren will snatch at this idea and say, "That is exactly our position. Christ has not forbidden the making of munitions so long as we do not use them. So we may help the country in this way."

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I think I have presented the argument as well as it can be stated, but it is not good enough. Do you not remember how the name Christadelphian came into being? It was in the American Civil War. There were about an equal number of brethren in North and South. How could they engage in fratricidal strife for the support of States in the politics of which they took no part, or how could they make weapons which might be used to slay their brethren? The same rule applies in Europe now, although the facts are not so obvious. With modern warfare, however, and its indiscriminate destruction of cities, the argument is surely stronger. No man on earth can trace the history of the bombs he makes, or know whom they will destroy.

Apart from this thought, is it safe or consistent to make a narrow application of the letter of Christ's law? Should we not keep as far as possible from the forbidden thing? In other matters all see this need. We are commanded not to avenge ourselves, but we are told that God will avenge, using the wicked as a "sword of the Lord", for the punishment of other wicked. No brother would dream of seeking to promote vengeance by putting the appropriate weapon into the hands of another man, saying, "I am not avenging myself, I am getting another man to do it for me." I imagine, too, that a father would not be pleased if he found his little son displaying the logic of infantile diabolism by saying to a friend: "I must not throw stones at the neighbours, Father has forbidden it, so you sit on the wall and I will hand the stones to you." We might smile at such childish sophistry but we should not desire to imitate it.

There is another argument which must be mentioned

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although it is so absurd as to seem beneath contempt. It is argued that any useful work will help the country in time of war and so there is no difference between one job and another. Even milk can be turned into an explosive, any food we produce will help the war forward and so all useful work can rank as making munitions! It is to be hoped that no brethren will use such a silly argument, but it is used in the world. It figured just recently in a letter to a leading paper, the writer signing his name as if proud of it. He of course carried the argument to its illogical extreme, no difference between working, paying taxes or fighting!

The folly of the argument is best seen if we change the setting. If in time of war an Englishman were captured by the enemy and ordered to fire at his own people he would refuse. In such a situation he would be a conscientious objector and if he were a man at all, no efforts at compulsion would avail to move him. He would die rather than kill his brethren. If ordered to make wire entanglements or munitions to be used against his friends he would object, but under a severe form of compulsion he might give way and work. If ordered to grow food he would obey without the slightest pricking of conscience. I need not elaborate this, everyone knows that it is true. There are many grades of work between the two extremes. My advice is, Keep as far away from war work as you possibly can. No man can judge you, Christ is your judge and we may be sure that He will take note of both the matters I have mentioned: faithfulness to His commands in both letter and spirit, and consideration for your brethren whose position may be affected by your attitude.

I regarded munition-making as forbidden work for brethren

LETTERS TO YOUNG CHRISTADELPHIANS

at the time of the Russo-Japanese war many years before you young people were born and I have never seen any reason to change. So my position is much like that of the captured Englishman in the illustration just given. Nothing would compel me to bear arms. I would rather die. Only under severe compulsion would I make lethal weapons. Without any compulsion but with right good will I would grow potatoes if war-time emergencies freed us from the tyranny of the Potato Board!

I notice that the Prime Minister recently expressed the opinion that only few men would pretend to be conscientious objectors. Few does he say? Would there be any? There might be some political objectors so fired by class hatred that they would endure anything rather than obey, but that is not quite what we understand by conscience. So far as religious conscientious objectors are concerned it seems incredible that anyone would join their ranks except as the result of conviction. Surely in the next war there will not be much of charge and counter-charge or "going over the top". The war will be decided by the wiping out of cities and the destruction of national morale. We have no reason for supposing that civilians will be any safer than soldiers, and civilians who have to go forth to any kind of work that the Government demands might be in far greater danger. As for food, everyone knows that if there is a shortage, soldiers will be the last to feel the pinch.

As for the present time, the young willing conscript will have so much the better experience that nothing but a burning conviction would make a young man choose the other part. The ordinary young man will go forth to six months of pleasant

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adventure, will gain a little cheap éclat¹ and will come back to a job made safe for him by law. The young conscientious objector will go forth to very unpleasant adventure, will probably have to endure a bitter trial of sneers and reproaches, and with almost a certainty that his job — if it was a good one — will be lost to him.

Now I am certain that this last point is the one that for the moment will most trouble our young men. They can bear unpleasant adventure and sneers, but if a young man seemed on the threshold of a brilliant career, it seems hard to lose it.

I sympathise and would like to help in any way possible. Perhaps I may give a little help by presenting another picture to you. If this is indeed the eleventh hour as all signs seem to indicate, your trial will not last long. Even apart from that, your experience will probably not be as bad as that of some of your elders who suffered for other reasons in former days and endured sharp trials in addition to bearing the “burden and heat of the day”.

Probably you have never thought of this. If a brother had been a regular lecturer for twenty years before you were born it is natural for you to regard him as a kind of institution, or as an old man with settled position in the world and no problems on the human plane. The fact is that fifty years ago there was far less toleration of Christadelphians than there is now. I believe in my first letter I told you of a brother who was summarily ejected from a thousand-a-year job because he left the Church of England and became a Christadelphian. There were others on various planes who suffered in a similar manner.

¹ Or, social recognition and applause.

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Beyond this there was the apparently paradoxical fact that fifty years ago there was a much keener anticipation of the coming of Christ than there is now, or possibly it was a failure to appreciate the meaning of the words "occupy until I come". Whatever the cause, it is certain that many estimable brethren in those days quite failed to "lay up for their children", or even to let the children know what kind of a world they had entered. Why not spend to the limit of their possessions with the end of the age so near? What did it matter about careers for young people who would so soon stand before the judgment seat of Christ? The result was that when some of the young people (grey-headed elders now) were perverse enough to contemplate such a mundane matter as marriage, when they had to think about a career and adequate provision for a home, circumstance kicked them out into the world as ill-equipped for the struggle as a pet lap-dog would be if thrown to the wolves. In those days there was no out-of-work pay for anyone and not much charity either. "A black-coated worker" who had a wife either in being or in prospect dreaded the idea of becoming an unskilled worker as he dreaded nothing else on earth. He held on to his work even if he worked without pay as was sometimes the fate of the exploited commission men of those days. If he could not afford a meal he tightened his belt and went without. At all costs he must keep smiling and of course never breathe a word of his troubles to more fortunate friends. Such a man in the world would rest on Sunday or use the day to cultivate the acquaintance of potential customers. A brother in such a position would use the day for another kind of work and perhaps eventually provoke a forceful protest from outraged nature.

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It was natural for men who had such experience to make up their minds that their sons should be better prepared for the battle of life, and as "the golden mean" is difficult to attain we may have gone to the opposite extreme. Perhaps the present legislation will in some instances supply a necessary corrective. God knows best and He will make no mistake.

In any event I think it is extremely improbable that any of you young men will have to endure trials more severe than those which came to many of your elders in the days of individual struggle with nothing between work and the work-house. In those days of hard labour, sneers and reproaches were a normal trial even in days of peace. So, when you are feeling the strain of contact with a cruel world, remember that others have been educated in the same hard school. Not only prophets and apostles who seem a long way off, but men you know quite well and whose voices you sometimes hear. They may not tell you much of their early struggles, they perhaps do not even care to think of the matter, and certainly they would not care to speak of tribulation which was the ordinary price of fidelity. Having had their share of suffering, they can sympathise with those who suffer now. They can enter into the feelings of youth, for they have been young. Conscious as they are of the inevitable changes life will bring, they sometimes see something pathetic in youthful joy, and something gloomy and menacing in that which seems to youth an unclouded sky. Clouds will surely come so it may be well for them to come early.

Elders who have suffered most and sympathise best will try to help, but they will never give the slightest encouragement to

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self-pity, for it is the most weakening of mental failings. For this reason I ask you to look at the many lines in old faces and think of all the stories they could tell. All elders will agree with me in this. Human life even at its best is soon over, viewed in retrospect it seems a feeble effort, and however much we have suffered there is nothing to regret except our sins.

With all good wishes,

I am your brother in the Hope of Israel,

ISLIP COLLYER.