

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days — 1.

THE DANGER OF PARTIAL TRUTH: THE STRICKLER DOCTRINE

IN *The Christadelphian*, 1939, page 83, the death of Bro. A. D. Strickler, of the Buffalo Ecclesia, USA, is reported. He attained the age of 93, and had been associated with the brotherhood for seventy-nine years. The report indicated the great esteem in which he was held by his ecclesia, a brother reputed to be a tireless worker, full of infectious zeal, and who had many times conversed with Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts.

Yet, despite all this, it proved to be a *zeal without knowledge* (Rom. 10:2). Notwithstanding a fine beginning, for more than 25 years Bro. Strickler adopted unscriptural views upon the significance of the sacrifice of Christ, which were not in harmony with the *Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith*. Therefore the editor of *The Christadelphian*, then added a comment to the death notice, because the writings of Bro. Strickler had been the cause of very much strife, contention and division in the Brotherhood. Brother Carter's words echoed the feelings of all true friends

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of Christ, when he wrote: "It is a matter of great regret that the labours of the closing years of one so long associated with the Truth and so beloved by his companions should have produced these results. But such being the case, a reference to the position of *The Christadelphian* in relation to the teaching, or the reputed teaching of our deceased brother seems to be timely. In 1921*, when *Out of Darkness into Light* [Bro. Strickler's treatise upon his new-found ideas—SS] was published, Bro. C. C. Walker [editor of the *Christadelphian* at the time—SS] pointed out that the pamphlet challenged some of the statements in the pamphlets, *The Slain Lamb*

April 24, 1869

Bro. A. D. Strickler

Dear brother, your does not
appear to consider the bond of the covenant
a sign to a possession. & all the benefits
a knowledge of the truth, but have separate things,
and separate, or better, to the same death.

This is evident beyond dispute to all who are
not alienated from John 13, 20, & the 11th & 14th and
2nd Thim^o.

Such dispute is more useless on the former
topics of mist. & reasoning & neglecting the way,
the matters of the law. The non-remission of
all out of Christ, is a ceremonial consent of one
of the "great sins" treated in the *Christadelphian*, &
the hope of those who all such will be
put to shame & damnation.

Yours truly,
John Thomas

A letter from Bro. Thomas to the young
A. D. Strickler on April 24th, 1869

* A. D. Strickler was teaching error on this subject at least as early as 1913, as revealed in Bro. Smallwood's excellent book, *Bible Teaching Concerning Sin and Sacrifice* — available from Logos office and book agents — JU.

and *The Blood of Christ*. We know one brother who read carefully *Out of Darkness*, and marked in red all statements setting out one view, and in blue all the contradictory ones... Brother Walker said: "We repudiate the doctrines (which Bro. Strickler had set out in opposition to the pamphlets named)."

As time went by, many brethren were dissatisfied with the continuing situation, and some ecclesias separated because of the erroneous statements in Bro. Strickler's book, which appeared many years after Bro. Roberts had passed off the scene, and when Bro. Strickler's ideas had evidently matured from crotchets into definite false doctrine.

Ecclesial Division and Strife

Consider the unfavourable reaction of brethren in his area who knew him well. The Toronto (Winchester Hall) Ecclesia wrote in the *Intelligence* section of *The Christadelphian*, Dec., 1921, p. 570: "The pamphlet, *Out of Darkness Into Light* contains the following unscriptural teaching: (1) That there is no sin in the flesh. (2) That sin was borne by Jesus figuratively, that his sacrifice as a sin-bearer was a 'highly figurative and symbolic performance,' and that this symbolism 'represented the satisfying of justice.' (3) That he was punished for the transgressions of others. That he became a bearer of sin by suffering the punishment due for sin. (4) That the sins from which Jesus was justified were the transgressions of others that were laid upon him, and by which he was defiled. He was not made unclean by his nature but by the sins of his people which he bore to the tree. (5) That Jesus did not come under the redeeming efficacy of his own sacrifice. (6) That his offering was for personal sins, or moral impurity only. (7) That he was not a priest while in the flesh, and therefore could not offer for himself as such. (8) That Jesus did not offer an atoning sacrifice for himself to redeem himself. That it was not necessary for him, morally or physically, that he should offer for himself."

The Toronto Ecclesia concluded by saying that they believed such teaching to be subversive of Bible doctrine on the subject of the Atonement, and contrary to the *Christadelphian (Birmingham Amended) Statement of Faith*.

The Danger of Partial Truth

The difficulty with the teaching of Bro. Strickler (as with those teachings of "partial atonement" in numerous respects, very much akin to his), is that he positively asserted that he accepted the *BASF*. Some may say, Why then pursue the matter, it being merely a misunderstanding of words and terms? The problem lies in the fact that he was a voluminous writer, a noted speaker, and his writings, whilst containing statements of truth, also included unmistakable error. It is also a matter of history now, that many brethren and sisters *have been drawn away into adopting his false understanding of the Atonement, and have accepted his new (although not really new!) wind of false doctrine*. If we were to allow every new wind of false teaching to go unchallenged, then, when the Master returns, *shall he find THE faith on the earth?* (Lk. 18:8).

Readers should carefully note the very clear statement of error as shown by the Toronto Ecclesia in the extract above. Any similarity to that being taught in some places today should be noted and such teaching refused.

In 1939, Bro. John Carter wrote: "A criticism by Bro. Strickler of a pamphlet published by this office led to a correspondence of about eighteen months, now

terminated by his death. This, with original letters and copies of letters which have passed through our hands written to other brethren (Bro. Strickler was an indefatigable and voluminous letter-writer) led us to the conclusion that... he did not accept without reserve some of the clauses in the Statement of Faith concerning the nature of man and the sacrifice of Christ. The republication of a synopsis on "*The Nature of Man and the Sacrifice of Christ*" by Bro. Roberts, in December 1937, and editorials in 1938, indicate the attitude of this magazine on the doctrines in dispute. Our object is to maintain the teaching of *The Statement of Faith* in opposition to the doubts on these subjects which have been put forward" (*The Christadelphian*, 1939, p. 84).

Almost a decade later, as evidence in the report on page 4 of the *Detroit Conference*, held in 1947, the harm done to the ecclesias over that period is seen in the leavening influence of the false teaching in the New England, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Hill St. Newark, NJ meetings — first in false teaching, and secondly, in support of the false doctrine, by agreeing to fellowship it. It was reported at the conference that "the recorder, ex recorder, other arranging brethren, and many members" [*of the Boston Ecclesia*] "could not accept the Fifth Clause of the Statement of Faith" (*Detroit Conference Report*, 1947, pp. 4-5).

Oh! what mischief is done when prominent brethren adopt a new and false doctrine, leading others down the same path!

Ecclesias Take a Stand for Truth

The Detroit Belvedere Avenue Ecclesia also advised *The Christadelphian* (Dec., 1921, p. 570), that "We regret to announce that it is deemed necessary by a number of our brethren and sisters meeting at above address to withdraw from 1st Street Ecclesia, on the doctrinal error concerning the sacrifice of Christ, as taught by Bro. Strickler." The Pomona Ecclesia advised similarly on p. 571: "(1) Having regard to the distracting influence of Bro. Strickler's writings, therefore be it resolved that we disapprove of the aforesaid writings, and recommend their non circulation. (2) We believe that all the topics treated in Bro. Strickler's pamphlets are clearly, fully, and satisfactorily set forth in the Amended Birmingham Statement of Faith, by which statement we stand fast... all questions of fellowship shall be settled and determined by this statement of faith, and not by Bro. Strickler's writings — Arthur Wolfe, rec. bro."

These examples are typical of many others showing the concern for the preservation of Bible Truth, manifested by faithful brethren in that area at that time. Bro. Strickler's writings were *divisive*, as seen in this communication from Chicago, Rice Street, Ecclesia: "As a majority of the ecclesia here have passed a resolution declaring that the pamphlet *Out of Darkness into Light* contains errors not in accord with the 'Birmingham Statement of Faith,' and refusing fellowship to anyone who holds with it, we would like it to be known that a number of believers here, after carefully and prayerfully considering the work, do not find it to contain any errors of so serious a nature, and therefore must decline to make it a matter of fellowship, our position resting as formerly, on the Birmingham Statement of Faith" (*The Christadelphian*, 1921, p. 334).

Answers to Correspondents

The agitation caused by Bro. Strickler's writings were reflected in the many references to the matter in the pages of *The Christadelphian* throughout 1921.

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Correspondents were not always supportive of the stand against error taken by the editor, Bro. C. C. Walker. But this correspondent was: Bro. B. J. Dowling, of Worcester, Mass., who wrote: "I wish to tell you how highly we appreciate the faithfulness, discretion and ability displayed by you in your conduct of *The Christadelphian*... Your strictures on the Truth-nullifying pamphlet *Out of Darkness into Light* are especially good. The author's method of trimming and changing words is most dangerous to the rising generation, who are not familiar with the controversies of many years ago [*The same could be said today—SS*]. *It is sad indeed to see one whom we would like to respect for his early record, now turning and spending the remainder of his strength in a vain effort to establish an old and threadbare heresy [E. W. Turney's Clean Flesh Theory— SS]... His errors are in some cases so artfully coloured, that to some of the weaker ones, they seem even more probable than the Truth, because of the superficial partiality for the 'orthodox view'.*" (*The Christadelphian*, 1921, p. 403).

Grasping his new found understanding of the Atonement, Bro. Strickler produced another pamphlet improperly styled, *A Defence of Dr. Thomas and Bro. Roberts*. In the same correspondence to the editor, page 404, Bro. Dowling wrote of his pamphlet: "No intelligent person reading the works of Doctor Thomas and Brother Roberts can have any doubt as to their teaching on this most important branch of human enquiry and hope. But on the other hand, a streak of uncertainty and doubt darkens almost every page of the pernicious pamphlets in question. The author's words are many, but they are without understanding, and evidently God's method of putting away sin has never been truly apprehended by him. So really uncertain are his own conclusions on this matter, that he declares that 'to insist upon *any one* of the many theories and doctrines that have been floated and propounded, is to assume an awful responsibility and to trifle with one's future destiny.' Thus he shows himself to be confirmed in his errors not by satisfying proofs, but by doubts and uncertainties of every kind."

The Surety of Truth

Bro. Walker was appreciative of support in this time of crisis, and replied on page 404 as follows: "We are grateful to our brother not only for his words of appreciation, which come at a time when there is a good deal of the contrary things current, but for his outspoken condemnation of current obscurations of the Truth. This strengthens our hands in a difficult task... and [I] exhort all and sundry to read Dr. Thomas' and Bro. Roberts' writings for themselves, and not to be misled by secondhand extracts therefrom and allusions thereto... but if they really taught such things as some allege, we would have nothing to do with them... it is because of the faithfulness of these authors to the Word of God, that we stick to this enterprise, and, even so, we are not committed to every detail of interpretation, as this issue bears witness. 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1Thes. 5:21)."

The apostle Paul advised believers at Corinth of the need for the trumpet call to give *no uncertain sound* (1Cor. 14:8). He was so *certain* that there is *only one* gospel, and that the apostles have delivered it to us (Gal. 1:8-9; 3:1). The apostle John likewise spoke of "*this doctrine*," and for those with something else, he warned: "receive not into your house" (2Jn. v. 10). Paul told the Thessalonians: "If any man obey not our word... note that man and have no company with him" (2Thes. 3:14). To the Romans he said: "Mark them which cause divisions... contrary to the doctrine ye have learned and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). He said to Timothy: "If any teach otherwise, and consent not to... even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine... from such withdraw thyself" (1Tim. 6:3-5).

A Bible Believer Turned Inside Out

In the history we are reviewing, we have Bro. Strickler, a zealous Bible believer who ran well for a while, and then, as Paul told Titus concerning obdurate heretics, that such an one is become "subverted" (the Greek *ekstrepho* means "*turned inside out; inverted*" — and sadly, there have been many such in the history of the Christadelphian movement). The word represents the man who accepts the Truth at baptism, works tirelessly for it, rises to prominence in the Household, becomes a leader and example to others, only to eventually declare that he can no longer accept the things he once taught others, and he becomes "*inverted*" in his thinking. Sometimes we have seen such an one traverse the whole canvas of Scripture, vainly endeavouring to apply new definitions to words and new meanings to phrases to support his new theory — his thinking truly becomes *ekstrepho*, turned inside out to what he once believed. As the apostle says to Titus: "Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Tit. 3:11). This man has now ventured a little way down the road to apostasy. Such was the experience of the A. D. Strickler, admired by many in his day, but what strife his ambiguous writings have caused over the years, and even to this present time!

Bro. Carter summed it up well when he said in the year of Bro. Strickler's death: "Brother Strickler now sleeps... until the coming of the Lord. He will judge us all, and the judgment of our sleeping brother we may all leave with him. But men pass as we in turn shall pass in the continued absence of the Lord; yet the responsibility for upholding the Truth with its saving power remains, a duty devolving upon those who are privileged to know it" (*The Christadelphian*, 1939, page 84).

In our next article, God willing, we shall look at Bro. Strickler's pamphlet and Bro. Walker's editorial in which he examines salient points in the light of the teaching of Scripture.

— *Stan Snow*.

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days — 2.

THE DANGER OF PARTIAL TRUTH: THE STRICKLER DOCTRINE

IN the writings of our pioneer brethren we have a wonderful heritage. Investigation convinces us that Bro. Thomas was a man raised up for the purpose of reviving the first century teachings in the latter days. When the time came for the work to be done, God saw to it that there was a man fitted for the task. Bro. Thomas was not inspired, nor was he infallible. That was not necessary. What was required was a man with a clear mind, able to grasp the teaching of God's Word, and able to recognise the errors of men for what they are, and with the ability to lucidly point out these things to us. Therefore the establishment of the ecclesias was not a matter of chance or human caprice, but the *Hand Of Providence* supervised the formation of ecclesias, in just the same way as happens in the individual calling of a people for His Name (Acts 15:14).

Therefore, when men, whosoever they may be, damage this great latter-day work of Yahweh, by introducing new winds of spurious or doubtful doctrine, which divide and scatter the ecclesia, as A. D. Strickler has done, whether unwittingly or not (Christ will judge), we consider we have no alternative but to "earnestly contend for the Faith" (Jude 3).

In the Truth's Service or Disservice ?

Bro. Strickler said he had a sincere desire to do the Truth service before he passed off the scene. But alas, as reported in *The Christadelphian*, April, 1923, page 180, "there is much trouble and confusion over Bro. A.D.Strickler's unhappy pamphlets... it has been a disservice indeed. The intelligence items this month from various parts are conflicting and confusing." Earlier in 1921, in his editorial for July, page 313, Bro. Walker considered the salient points in Bro. Strickler's pamphlet. He pointed out the seriousness of the departure from sound doctrine and observed in Hebrews 9:12 that: "*Paul is here dealing with 'Christ, the High Priest' (verse 11) and that he obtained 'eternal redemption' for himself that it might be for us. To say that it was 'for us' and 'not for himself,' is to contradict the Word of God, and to take a step at least towards that doctrine of Antichrist that denies that Christ has come in the flesh... These things have been faithfully upheld from the beginning, and contradictory teaching has not been tolerated and should not be now.*"

Bro. Walker goes on to make reference to the works of Bro. Roberts, in *The Slain Lamb*, and *The Blood of Christ*, and Bro. Thomas' little pamphlet *Catechesis* and says "Many of the statements of these pamphlets are now challenged, as in the pamphlet, *Out of Darkness into Light*, which, while admitting that Christ is 'the Saved One,' (page 30), nevertheless objects strongly (page 55) to the idea that the life of Jesus was a 'forfeited life;' and on page 73

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presents it as 'proved... that God's method of salvation by the shedding of blood to make atonement did not apply to Christ,' a statement which is a direct contradiction of Heb 13:20 quoted above. Again on page 56, the writer sets out to show 'that Christ could not be his own ransom sacrifice through death;' which, as before shown, was exactly what the Word of God declared he should be and was (Zech 9; Heb 13). We are not surprised that these things produce remonstrance and trouble, as visible in our Intelligence columns... We repudiate the doctrines objected to above; but as to the men in question, those in association with them must decide the question of association for themselves."

Plausible but Erroneous Conclusions

If we pick up on A. D. Strickler's faulty conclusion on page 73 of his pamphlet, alluded to above, and examine his reasoning, to see where he went wrong, it can assist us to avoid similar disastrous mistakes. His reasoning seems logical at first glance. But it is contradicted by a passage of Scripture, and that must be the end of it. He reasons that Moses, the mediator of Israel, had no mediator for himself, and so could not obtain the typical salvation (of entering the land) for which he pleaded. He maintains that a mediator cannot be a mediator for himself, and this proves that "***the shedding of blood to make atonement did not apply to Christ.***" This line of reasoning could perhaps be persuasive, if it were not for scriptural testimony such as Heb 13:20, which positively contradicts it by stating "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."

Selecting another of his equally faulty and obviously dangerously misleading conclusions from his pamphlet, which is before me as I write, he maintains on page 56, also alluded to above, that "***Christ could not be his own ransom sacrifice through his death***" and again his reasoning could perhaps appear to be plausible at a superficial reading. He quotes Num 18:17, which tell us that the firstling of cows, sheep, and goats shall not be redeemed, for they are holy. Strickler argues that Christ, being holy, could not be his own ransom sacrifice, for these clean animals were typical of Christ, and they did not need redemption. Again this conclusion must be abandoned, for Zech. 9:9, referring to Christ, states that "thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation (note the margin, "saving ***himself***"), lowly and riding upon an ass." Also Heb 13:20, already quoted, says that Christ's blood, the blood of the everlasting covenant, brought ***him*** (and not us as yet) from the dead.

Where did Strickler go wrong in his reasoning? He tried to establish a point by applying Bible types in the face of direct scriptural testimony to the contrary, whereas ***true Bible types are always in harmony with Scripture.***

Further Ecclesial Reactions

The *Intelligence* section of *The Christadelphian* for July, 1921, page 333, reports the Toronto, Winchester Hall ecclesia's attitude to the disturbing doctrines as follows: "The leading disseminator of these unscriptural doctrines on this continent is Bro. A. D. Strickler (Buffalo, N.Y.). We refuse to waste time with such in the everlasting discussion of what Truth is. We are confident we have the Truth as a result of the labours of brethren Thomas and Roberts, and our duty is to apply it in our own upbuilding and purification, and the enlightenment of the stranger."

The September number for the same year, on page 430, reported from Canton

ecclesia, Ohio, "At our last business meeting a resolution was unanimously adopted to withhold fellowship from all those teaching or advocating the erroneous doctrines as taught by Bro. A. D. Strickler..."

On the same page the Chicago (Masonic Temple) ecclesia reported that "As a result of our stand upon the doctrinal errors concerning the Sacrifice of Christ, the following brethren and sisters have separated from us..." and the Lansing ecclesia, Ohio, reported that "we will not fellowship any who advocate or believe any of the teachings of bro. A.D.Strickler..."

And so the reports went on and on, month after month, showing the havoc wrought upon the ecclesias by the mischievous pamphlet. Bro. H .A. Sommerville, of Ariel, Pennsylvania wrote to the *Christadelphian* editor: "Having no personal dislike to Bro. Strickler, but profound sorrow that his labours are destructive of vital principles of the Truth... we earnestly look and sincerely pray that you may continue to speak ... with no uncertain sound... and rejoice that you are ready to strengthen those who understand... concerning the nature of the sacrifice of Christ as brethren Thomas and Roberts understood it, and, what is even more important, as revealed in the Scriptures." (October, 1921, pages 451-452).

The Christadelphian, December, 1921, page 569, reported that the Toronto, (Musicians Temple) ecclesia, not having a problem in their own meeting, and being possibly the largest ecclesia on the American Continent, advised of their attitude and action taken to educate the brethren and sisters on the much discussed question. They issued to every new member of the ecclesia, a copy of *The Slain Lamb* and *The Blood of Christ*, because these publications accurately defined their position. The present writer believes that this course of action has the best chance of any to maintain unity, in situations like this.

Some Good Came Out of Controversy.

Throughout 1921-1923, ecclesias in the U.S.A., particularly in the Eastern States, were stirred into looking more closely at the important subject of the Sacrifice of Christ, and declaring their position. The Brooklyn Ecclesia stated: "We stand firmly on the Amended Birmingham Statement of Faith, and will not tolerate any false teachings." The Los Angeles (Cal.) South Hill St. ecclesia reported: "Does not fellowship those who hold the doctrines advanced in the pamphlet *Out of Darkness into Light*, or those who fellowship such. The brethren here much appreciate the articles running in *The Christadelphian* clearly affirming the Truth on the subject of the Sacrifice of Christ." The Yucaipa ecclesia "Owing to the dissension caused by the circulation of the pamphlet *Out of Darkness into Light*, we wish to have this intimated that we meet exclusively on the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith." (*The Christadelphian*, January, 1923, pages 46-47).

Truth and Error — A Dangerous Mixture

In *The Christadelphian* for April, 1923, pages 180-181, the Toronto Ecclesia took a course of action which seemed, at first, to help the distressing situation, over Strickler's "unhappy pamphlets." They submitted a series of plain questions to him and got from him plain answers. The answers asked of him were either "yes" or "no," to nine propositions, and he gave an unqualified "yes" to nearly every question. Taken on face value, it seemed that the matter was after all a

misunderstanding over words and phrases. But alas, years later, in correspondence with Bro. John Carter, the definite underlying errors held by Bro. Strickler were unmistakable (*The Christadelphian*, 1939, page 84). What then was the problem ?

Previous doctrinal controversies that troubled the Household were of a much more clear-cut nature. The earlier dissensions caused by George Dowie, E.W. Turney, R. Ashcroft, and then J.J. Andrews, were clear doctrinal errors — doctrinal differences that were openly affirmed in each instance. But Bro. Strickler openly affirmed acceptance of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, and also openly affirmed, held and disseminated widely, statements upon the nature of the Sacrifice of Christ that were contrary to the intent of the BASF. Apparently, notwithstanding his sincerity, he did not discern the contradictions in his conclusions. As for the effect of his teaching upon others; Truth mixed with error can be very misleading to those who are immature and unskilled in the Word.

Examples of Bro. Strickler's Errors

On page 26 of *Out of Darkness into Light*, there is truth *mixed* with error. He states "Having the common sinful human nature with those he died for, he was able to show forth by the death of the cross, a violent death, what man, as a freewill mortal creature, deserved because of his sins in thought, word, and deed; **and at the same time, what the common human nature deserved because of its lusts, that is, natural impulses. Human nature... deserves circumcision as well as annihilation**" (emphasis mine S.S.).

We have no problem with this statement, understood in harmony with the B.A.S.F. But a few lines further on he makes the amazing and contrary utterance: "Christ's human nature did not make him unclean... To say that Christ's human nature was unclean, although potentially true, is wide off the mark... Christ had no sins to atone for; and in reference to his sinful flesh or flesh full of sin, it could not possibly be atoned for."

Now what saith the Scripture? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Job 14:4), also "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). What did Bro. Roberts say to E.W.Turney on this matter of atoning for Christ's nature? "Is it not clear that your Christ is not Paul's Christ, with whom it was necessary that he should offer up himself for the purging of his own nature." (*The Christadelphian*, Oct. 1873, page 468.). What did Bro. Thomas say about the unclean nature of Christ? "The character of Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled...but his flesh was like our flesh, in all its points — weak, emotional, unclean." (*Eureka*, "Deity manifested in Spirit," vol. 1, p. 106).

On page 27 of his book, Bro. Strickler states "the physical nature, either of Christ or his brethren, is not the object of salvation." But what saith the Scripture? "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the **redemption** of our **body**" (Rom 8:23).

These erroneous statements by Bro. Strickler are interspersed with statements of sound doctrine, showing a mind that reasons, but not with breadth of judgment and therefore without discernment.

— Stan Snow.

Our next article will look at A.D.Strickler's faulty reasoning upon "Christ our Altar."

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days — 3.

THE DANGER OF PARTIAL TRUTH: THE STRICKLER DOCTRINE

FROM all the reports we have of Bro. Strickler, he was held in high respect and regard by his ecclesia until the year of his death, 1938. Nevertheless he persisted with his disruptive ideas upon the nature of the sacrifice of Christ. Eighteen months prior to his death he took *The Christadelphian* to task, upon a pamphlet published by the editor, Bro. John Carter. This resulted in correspondence throughout this period, convincing Bro. Carter that Bro. Strickler had reservations about and alternate ideas upon some of the clauses in *The Statement of Faith*, concerning the nature of man and the sacrifice of Christ.

The erroneous teaching of A. D. Strickler examined and analysed against the Truths of the Scriptures

Then, as late as 1947, as demonstrated in the *Report of the Detroit Conference*, Bro. Strickler's widely circulated and disruptive doctrines were a stumbling block to unity efforts at that time. "**Stricklerism**", a word coined to describe what is really a variation of *The Clean Flesh Theory* of E.W. Turney, survives today in the ecclesial world. In this article we continue to examine the Strickler teachings, to see where they are true and where they are astray.

Christ Our Altar

The editorial in *The Christadelphian*, February, 1939, page 77, at the time of the report of Bro. Strickler's death, considered the topic of "**Christ Our Altar**," a matter upon which erroneous ideas were being promulgated. Bro. Carter wrote: "*There is the brazen altar of the Law: the plates of brass being made from the censers of 'those sinners against their own souls,' Korah and his company. As Dr. Thomas says: 'The connection of the plates with sin's flesh is established by their history.' The brazen altar indicates the crucifixion of sin's flesh in him whose soul was made an offering for sin, and whom 'God made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him. These types of the Old Testament all meet in him who was the Son of God, made of our nature, who overcame the impulses of the flesh....'*"

Bro. Strickler states the following, which clearly differs from the point made by Bro. Carter: "*The prevalent idea is that the brazen altar... was made unclean when it was fabricated or constructed, because those engaged in the work were unclean by reason of having 'sin in the flesh' as a physical principle; and that it was from this uncleanness that the altar was cleansed and atoned for... The antitype being Christ, therefore it is argued that he too must have had an atonement made for himself to cleanse him from his own sin in the flesh, for he, by it, as an altar, was made unclean.*" He continues with lengthy reasoning and further states: "*Christ's 'sin in the flesh' did not make him unclean nor defile him, we can readily see that Christ the altar was not made unclean by it.*" Then a few

lines further on he contradicts himself and speaks truth by stating "Truly, human nature has been defiled by 'sin in the flesh', and it has become a worthless thing in the ultimate purpose of God." Then he concludes in error again: "From the above testimony it is proven that the sin or uncleanness that defiled the altar was not 'sin in the flesh'; but sin in its primary sense." (*Out of Darkness into Light*, pages 61-66).

The above brief extracts, quoted from his pamphlet, are sufficient to demonstrate that his teaching not only contradicts itself, but is *not* in harmony with the BASF which he claimed to accept! On the other hand, the explanation given in Bro. Henry Sulley's book, of why, even in the Age to come, the altar in the great temple of Zion will need purging, is in perfect harmony with the BASF. Bro. Sulley writes: "In order to understand why the altar*in the temple of the age to come is to be cleansed and purged with blood, one must also be instructed in the means adopted by the Father for deliverance from the consequences of disobedience in Eden... so deliverance from the state or constitution of sin which passed upon the human race from Adam (the human race of which Christ formed a part — SS.) can only come on the condition, or conditions, prescribed by the Father." (*Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy*, pages 116,117).

Even in the Age to come, the sin-nature (body) of Christ which he possessed in the former days of his flesh, will be remembered in the purging with blood of that great altar on Zion — a necessary lesson for people of any dispensation (Eze. 43:18-20).

The Lord Needed Redemption

Bro. Strickler, maintains that he accepts the BASF which states: "...Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature... and, by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him" (clause 8). Bro. Strickler explains his understanding: "It is a marvellous thing that men are so blinded by a theory that they will read into the offering of Christ 'sin in the flesh' when Paul says, 'offered himself without spot to God'." (*Out of Darkness into Light*, page 68).

Bro. Strickler stumbled over that which Bro. Thomas correctly sorted out about one hundred years before; namely that Christ was without spot in character and obedience, but was not spotless in the human body which he bore in common with all the Adamic race. Bro. Strickler declares on page 69, "Here again we repeat, if no sin, no offering for himself, only an offering for those who have sins... It is what your leaders have taught you; you have allowed those leaders to do your thinking. "

What Bro. Strickler is in effect saying is that Bro. Thomas did not revive the Truth in the Latter Days, but it has fallen to the lot of Bro. Strickler to do it — and some feel that they are still doing it!

We think not!

In *The Christadelphian*, July, 1958, page 324, Bro. Carter reported on his tour to Australia, and included in the report is his comment on the Lord's sacrifice: "He needed redemption; he needed salvation from death. The confusion arises when we isolate him from his work... we must accept what is written concerning his benefit from his own work..."

On the other hand, Bro. Strickler states erroneously that “we have no right to say that his individual flesh was ‘flesh full of sin’ or ‘sinful flesh.’” Yet in the same breath he had stated the opposite, that Christ was “in the likeness or exact sameness of sinful flesh.” He continues in contradictory vein and states “*Christ had the same flesh or nature that in all others save himself sinned, therefore it was flesh of sin, of the same kind that sinned in others; but it was not sinful while he tabernacled in it.*” (*Out of Darkness into Light*, page 84). Confused reasoning such as this should never have been put into print, to “teach” others !

Sin, Sins, And Sin Offering

In *The Christadelphian*, March, 1938, page 127, Bro. Carter responded to this erroneous teaching in an editorial entitled *Sin, Sins, And Sin Offering*. On pp. 90-92 of his pamphlet, Bro. Strickler expounds Heb 4:15, 1John3:5, and these Scriptures tell us of Christ that “in him is no sin,” which Bro. Carter rightly points out, means no lawlessness, no disobedience. However, Bro. Strickler maintained that: “*the apostles do not draw a theoretical distinction between Christ’s character and Christ’s constitution... Paul could say of himself, as we can of ourselves, ‘sin dwelleth in me,’ but it is not said of Christ...*” (page 91).

Bro. Carter corrected this error (page 127), stating that “*It is doing violence to John’s context to take the words ‘in him is no sin’ as proof that Jesus had not the physical nature which Paul describes as ‘sin’.* John is thinking of sin in moral terms; but he does not contradict Paul who uses the word of physical condition. In fact, John makes the belief that the physical nature of Jesus was like ours a test of fellowship” (saying that those who teach to the contrary are *antichrist*: 1John 4:2, 3) ...*Paul says God ‘hath made Jesus to be sin for us, who knew no sin’ (2Cor 5:21). This does not mean that Jesus was a sinner; Paul excludes that, saying in effect, Jesus was made to be sin but was not a sinner.*”

Bro. Strickler teaches (page 40): “*Had the translators of the Authorised Version followed the same rule in the translation of 2Cor. 5:21, as they did in the following texts, they would have rendered the passage as follows: ‘For He hath made him a sin offering for us, who knew no sin.’ In no way has it the meaning of ‘sin in the flesh’.*”

In answer to this I would point out that when Bro. Strickler insists that Christ was made a “sin offering,” and when he says that Christ was not “made sin,” he is overlooking the fact that the Greek word *harmatia* has the primary meaning of “sin,” from a root “to miss the mark” (see Strong’s Concordance). This Greek word is the word that has chiefly been used as an equivalent for the Hebrew word *chattath*, meaning “an offence, sometimes habitual sinfulness,” from a root meaning “to miss the mark, hence to sin” (Strong).

Bro. Carter wrote to correct this error of Bro. Strickler: “*Paul says God hath made Jesus to be sin for us, who knew no sin*” (2Cor 5:21)... *saying in effect, Jesus was made to be sin, but was not a sinner. Neither does it mean that Jesus*

In order to understand why the altar in the temple of the age to come is to be cleansed and purged with blood, one must be instructed in the means adopted by the Father for deliverance from the consequences of disobedience in Eden

was made a sin offering... But while Paul says 'for a sin offering' in Rom 8:3, he says 'sin' and not 'sin offering' in 2 Cor 5:21. The same is true of Heb 9:28 "Christ... shall appear a second time **apart from sin...**' He was not 'apart from sin' at the first advent when he was offered to bear sins. The reason is evident: if he had not had our physical nature he could not have been the redeemer... If we ask where sin was condemned? the apostle says 'in the flesh'; on which Dr Thomas appositely remarks: 'Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there'." (*The Christadelphian*, March, 1938, pages 127, 128). See also *Elpis Israel*, page 130, par. 2, for a full exposition of this vital subject.

Bro. Carter concluded his remarks by pointing out that the truth on these matters had been before the Brotherhood for two generations, in clauses 5 & 8 in the BASF, and that the literature on the Truth has maintained this teaching.

Confused Teaching

We earlier saw Bro. Strickler's attitude to our pioneer brethren, when he said disparagingly of them and those who have followed in their footsteps: "*You have allowed those leaders to do your thinking.*" Well, his own writings are a decided contradiction in this regard, for he elsewhere *endorses* the BASF, stating on page 93 of his pamphlet "*But although he had no sins to offer for, **there was a sense in which this offering was for himself** (emphasis mine — SS) ..He had appointed that Christ should be perfected by suffering even unto death... through his own blood (he) entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). Christ's offering was therefore for himself as well as for the people; but it was not for his sins. Christ, as we are, was in need of 'eternal redemption'; he needed to be redeemed from the mortal flesh and blood condition, which he shared with us, and from the possession and dominion of sin — viewing sin as a personified power reigning unto death... inherited from Adam.*"

With teaching such as this, being a mixture of truth and error side by side, it is no wonder such havoc was wrought amongst the ecclesias. Like most errorists, A. D. Strickler had a *partially correct understanding of the Atonement*. Yet many did not allow themselves to be turned aside, and held fast in the face of this "wind of false doctrine." The Bridgeport (Ohio) Barton St. ecclesia wrote to *The Christadelphian* magazine: "*We are still holding fast to the faith and hope of life and are in agreement with the magazine on 'Sin, Sins, and Sin-offering,' in the March number, and by what was written by Dr. Thomas (The Christadelphian, May, 1938, page 239).* Others wrote to the editor to have queries on the Atonement explained, such as L.J.A., who asked why it was necessary for the Prince, Christ, to offer a sin offering for himself in the House of Prayer in the Kingdom Age (Eze 45:22). Bro. Carter replied at length, stating that Christ "*was himself a sharer in the benefits of his own sacrifice as Paul declares (Heb.9:12; 23; 13:20) ..Because Jesus was sinless as well as possessing 'the likeness of sinful flesh,' he was fitted to be the sin offering... Sacrifices in the past were prospective — in the future they will be retrospective of the one great offering.*" (*The Christadelphian*, June, 1938, page 263).

— Stan Snow [To be continued].

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days — 4.

The Danger of Partial Truth: THE DETROIT CONFERENCE

MUCH mischief occurred amongst the ecclesias by the later writings of Bro. A.D. Strickler. Reports from ecclesias, quoted from *The Christadelphian* magazine, tell their sorry story. Yet he was a respected brother, much loved by his own ecclesia, as seen in *The Christadelphian Intelligence* report for February, 1939, page 96: "With feeling of deep sorrow we record the sudden death of our beloved brother A.D. Strickler on December 16th... The memory of his life and work will be an inspiration to follow his example... Z.A.Cooke." However, unqualified respect is no guarantee of wholesomeness of doctrine, and accuracy of belief.

His pamphlet "*Out of Darkness into Light*" was first published in 1921, and controversy immediately ensued. Even after the Second World War, in 1947, brethren were still endeavouring to mend the division and achieve unity. To this end a conference was held of Berean and Central ecclesias in Detroit, U.S.A. in Oct. 1947, and the detailed report of that gathering describes the difficulties, notwithstanding the "excellent spirit" that prevailed amongst those attending.

At the conference, brethren reviewed their recent history, and the causes for their divided state. The report stated that "Some of us here today were present at a fraternal gathering in Worcester, Mass., 27 years ago, when a very well-meaning brother (but a 'muddled writer,' as he was many years later termed in *The Christadelphian Magazine*), distributed a suitcase full of books "*Out of Darkness into Light*." That was the 'opening wedge' to bring about our divided state. Without a single exception — every brother knew that the book contained false doctrine. The problem which arose at once was, not how to prove false doctrine in the book; the problem was 'How shall we effectively deal with a brother who teaches false doctrine while at the same time insisting that he accepts the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith'... It would still be very easy for us to deal with the situation except for the *further fact* that those ecclesias which believe and teach false doctrine (desiring above all else 'to have the name' of 'being in fellowship with B'ham') claim that they accept the B.A.S.F. (just as did the author of the book — and so we see the leaven at work)." (From the address by Bro. H.Deakin report, page 4).

Valuable Articles Presented on the Truth of the Matter

The ecclesial turmoil on the North American Continent stirred Bro. Carter to issue an excellent series of articles on "*The Nature of Man and the Sacrifice of Christ*" in *The Christadelphian*, 1937, pages 552-554; "*Sin, Sins, and Sin Offering*," 1938, pages 127-128, and "*The Nature of Man and Sacrifice of*

The erroneous teaching of A.D. Strickler examined and analysed against the Truths of the Scriptures

Christ," 1939, pages 228-230. These articles were gladly accepted by those in America who were struggling to refute the errors of Bro. Strickler. At the conference it was said: "We take courage, and thank God for brethren who so clearly hold up once more the glorious Truth *into which we were baptised.*" (*Detroit Report*, page 5, emphasis by S.S.).

On the other hand, these articles stirred Bro. Strickler to take Bro. Carter to task, and to finally reveal what had been perceived by many for a long time, that by his own admission, A.D. Strickler clearly did disagree with the B.A.S.F. His opposition to the Truth now disclosed his own erroneous understanding of The Atonement.

In appreciation of Bro. Carter's articles, it was further stated at the conference that: "Because of Bro. Carter's excellent articles on the subject at issue — because of his plain speaking, his asking those who disagree with his teaching to plainly declare that they disagreed with the Statement of Faith, and honestly resign from his fellowship — and because it was felt certain that his words would be followed by necessary scriptural action, the Los Angeles ecclesia... joined fellowship with the B'ham Central."

The Strickler Group Stands Aside

On page 6 of the report, a different attitude exhibited by some, was recorded. It states "There are many such instances as the May 10th, 1947 letter 'to all ecclesias ' by the Philadelphia (Strickler Fellowship) ecclesia, endorsed by the whole ecclesia, in support of Buffalo's rewriting of the fifth clause of Statement of Faith , in such a manner as to *exclude the word 'defilement,'* so as to make room for the Small Group falsely teaching that ' there was no change in the nature of Adam'." (emphasis by S.S.).

The seriousness of the Strickler doctrine was clearly discerned by the brethren then, as the next extract shows. It was a serious departure from truth then, and unfortunately, such things re-occur in ecclesial history.

"Let us spend just a few minutes on that point, brethren — The Small Group teaching that there was no change in the nature of Adam, is the thin-end-of-the-wedge that opens the way for the resultant large error — that Christ's nature was not defiled, and that he needed not to make an offering for himself... They, and Stricklerism teach that a man is not defiled until he sins... No wonder they wish to get rid of the fifth clause of the Statement of Faith — 'a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being and was transmitted to all his posterity' — which of course included Christ, our 'mercy seat' and 'altar' which also were covered with (and purified by) 'the blood of the everlasting covenant'." (*Detroit Conference Report*, page 6).

The Christadelphian Magazine Declares its Position

Eight years before, Bro. Carter had clearly enunciated the position of the magazine on *The Nature of Man and the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ* (*The Christadelphian*, May, 1939, page 228). He wanted to make very clear that the errors of Bro. Strickler were not supported by the magazine, nor by the Birmingham Central Ecclesia. This proved to be a good move, and in the December issue of *The Christadelphian* in 1939, page 560, the Los Angeles South LaBrea Ave. Ecclesia wrote to inform that: "In view of the true scriptural statement of doctrine and fellowship in the May, 1939, *Christadelphian* magazine, under the title '*The*

nature of man and the sacrifice of Christ' and of the full endorsement of that statement by the Birmingham Central Ecclesia, as reported in the June, 1939, *Christadelphian*, we the undersigned brethren and sisters have decided that there is no longer any scriptural justification for continuing the state of separation which has existed in the Brotherhood for so many years *on account of the erroneous teachings of the late brother A.D. Strickler...* We have therefore this day (Oct. 6, 1939), formed a meeting in Los Angeles on the Birmingham Amended Basis of Faith, and in affiliation with the Birmingham Central Ecclesia and all ecclesias in that fellowship who hold the Truth as outlined in the statement referred to in the above paragraph." (emphasis by S.S.).

Bro. Carter's article appeared under the heading "*The Christadelphian, On the Nature Of Man And The Sacrifice Of Jesus Christ.*" He wrote: "During the last eighteen months we have drawn attention to what we believe to be the true teaching of the Bible on these subjects (*The Christadelphian*, 1937, p. 552; 1938, pp. 127, 173). These doctrines have been maintained since the revival of the Truth nearly 100 years ago, and are set forth in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith... On the other hand the doctrine known amongst us as 'Renunciationism,' and associated with the name of Edward Turney, is defined thus..."

Bro. Carter then went on to define the "Clean Flesh Theory" of Edward Turney, which maintains that the body of Jesus did not inherit the curse of Adam, though derived from him through Mary; and was therefore not truly mortal, and that the death of Christ, being the act of his own free will, was not in any sense necessary for his own salvation.

The editor continued on page 229 (1939): "This contention with modifications has appeared more than once since it was proclaimed in the 1870's. Bro. Roberts met a form of it in the teaching of one Cornish, in answer to whom he drew up a series of propositions, which were reproduced in *The Christadelphian*, December, 1937. It has been revived in certain of its aspects in recent teaching in America [*that of A.D. Strickler — S.S.*] and it appears desirable that the attitude of this magazine towards this teaching should be once again emphasized."

A Consideration of Bro. Strickler's Errors

Having defined the Scriptural Truth concerning the Sacrifice of Christ, Bro. Carter then addressed the errors in Bro. Strickler's writings (*The Christadelphian*, 1939, p. 229). Taking the first two errors, where Bro. Strickler teaches that "(1) the words 'Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return' described the condition of man when first created, and are therefore not a sentence of death subsequently passed by God upon Adam as a result of transgression; and (2) that the 'death that has come by sin' is not the death that is common to all men, but the second death. The true teaching of the Bible, we [i.e., Bro. Carter] assert, is that we are dying creatures, inheriting a nature which is 'evil' (Mat. 7:11), in which 'evil is present,' which evil is further described as 'a law in our members', 'the law of sin in our members' (Rom. 7). Such phrases could not be used of Adam before he sinned.

If anyone has the courage to anoint his eyes with the eye-salve provided in the Word of God, he will have no difficulty in seeing that there has been a gradual decline in the spirituality of the brotherhood since the days of our pioneer brethren. It is our responsibility to revive the spirit of devotion and understanding for ourself and our companions

The Scriptures define sin in the primary sense as transgression of God's law (1John 3:4)... In a few passages of Scripture the word 'sin' is used in a secondary sense, by metonymy, of human nature... Jesus possessed our nature, which is a condemned nature. Because of this he shared in the benefits of his own sacrifice, as Paul declares: Heb 7:27; Heb 9:12; Heb 9:23; Heb 13:20. Therefore it is testified that 'he obtained eternal redemption' and that 'he was saved out of death' (Heb 9:12; 5:7-9)."

Where Brother Strickler Went Wrong

When one reads through Bro. Strickler's pamphlet, it is clear that he stumbled at the Scriptural principle enunciated in the foregoing remarks by Bro. Carter. Bro. Strickler *cannot* see that the *Scriptures define sin in two senses, firstly as transgression of God's law, and secondly that sin is used of human nature.* Because he sees sin in only one of these aspects, he has a *partial understanding of the Atonement.* It is beyond his grasp to see that the Scripture sometimes uses the word "sin" to describe human nature, and therefore he had *half* an understanding of the sacrifice of Christ.

Consider this statement by Bro. Strickler on page 60 of his pamphlet: "Now as the Bible gives no other reason for the death of Christ than for transgression, condemning transgression by an exhibition of the kind of death designed for sinners: where is the evidence to prove that Christ died to satisfy the condemnation supposed to rest upon him for his sinful flesh nature?"

In answer to his question we direct attention to the incident in Numbers 21:8, when Moses placed a serpent upon a pole, which refers to the crucifixion, as testified by Christ himself in John 3:14. The brass *serpent* on the pole referred to *sin* on that pole, and the *brass* emphasised the *flesh*, and it related to Jesus, and Jesus had no sin in the sense of transgression. Therefore the only sense in which it could relate to Jesus and to sin would be in relation to his *sin's flesh*, which unquestionably he had. God was directing Moses to parade on that pole the *cause of their sin*, namely sinful human nature, which is *the Devil* (Heb. 2:14), and at the same time, the means of salvation from sin, through faith in God's provision displayed on that pole. In Christ's crucifixion, in just the same manner, God was parading on that stake before the whole world, the basic *cause of mankind's sin*, which is sinful human nature, and the means of God's salvation from sin, which is through faith in the one upon the stake, or pole, even Jesus Christ.

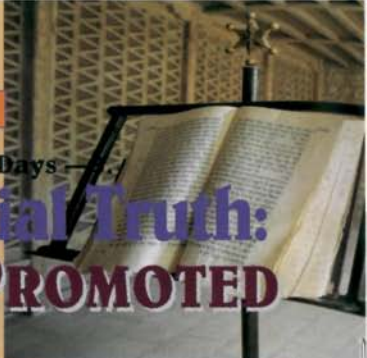
The Lord's Teaching Concerning His Nature

Our Lord recognised his true position in regard to his nature, when he said to one who called him "Good Master," "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." (Mat. 19:17; Mk. 10:18; Lk. 18:19). Jesus was perfectly aware that his *own* struggle was with the Devil, the "Diabolos" (Heb. 2:14), and that "*the Devil is a scriptural personification of sin in the flesh*" (see *A Declaration of the Truth Revealed In the Bible*, proposition 23). This is a key element in Bro. Strickler's departure from sound doctrine, and of those who follow him, and we shall look more closely at the subject of "The Devil" in the next article, God willing.

— Stan Snow.
(to be continued).

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days

The Danger of Partial Truth: CONFUSED IDEAS PROMOTED



Confused Ideas upon the Devil

An understanding of the Bible "Devil," can be a touchstone indicating a person's understanding of the Atonement. Former brother A.D. Strickler's ideas upon this subject are different from those held by Christadelphians from the inception of our community.

A.D. Strickler taught that our pioneers, and those who agree with them, ignore what he terms "the moral aspect of the sacrifice of Christ" (*Out of Darkness into Light*, p. 36), and "do not locate the seat of individual responsibility for sin at the right place." He imagined, quite wrongly, that we do not take personal responsibility for our own transgressions, but that we put the blame for our sins upon our sinful flesh nature. In this he was quite mistaken. It is true that our sin's flesh *is* the prime cause of transgressions, creating in us impulses styled "the motions of sins" (Rom. 7:5), and as Bro. Thomas expressed it: "The remote cause of these 'motions' is that physical principle, or quality (of the flesh), styled indwelling sin, which returns the mortal body to the dust" (*Elpis Israel*, page 140, Logos edit.). However, we *do not* use this as an excuse for sin. We do take responsibility for yielding to these impulses in the flesh, and seek forgiveness for falling short of the glory of God. We are not to be blamed for being born with our sinful flesh, but we are blameworthy for yielding to it the way we do from time to time.

A.D. Strickler termed the truth accepted by Christadelphians as "*Theory No. 1*," and his own newly acquired ideas as "*Theory No. 2*" (pages 35-36). It is astounding that someone

WRITING from the United States of America, A.D. Strickler caused ecclesias as far away as Australia to be affected by his teaching. Former members of the Albert Hall ecclesia, Elizabeth St., Sydney, wrote to Bro. John Carter, editor of *The Christadelphian*, June, 1939, pages 275-276, to report their appreciation of his efforts to counter the errors of A.D. Strickler. They related details of the division in their own ecclesia, not over the teaching of A.D. Strickler, which the whole ecclesia quickly perceived to be error, but over the application of fellowship in relation to those ecclesias involved in the matters. Hence another ecclesia was formed in Sydney in October, 1939, who wrote: "Being thus acquainted with the erroneous doctrine we readily perceived in A.D. Strickler's book, '*Out of Darkness into Light*' that to his mind, Christadelphians were in darkness on that particular subject. Although his language was ambiguous and contradictory, it was quite apparent to us, as you now state, 'he did not accept without reserve, some of the clauses in the Statement of Faith'."

who was so unsure of his own beliefs that he termed them "a theory," should have been followed by others, and to have caused such havoc amongst the ecclesias. He wrote on page 34: "It may not be unprofitable to consider some of the theories relating to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. One prominent theory (i.e., that which is the intent of the *BASF*, and not some doubtful theory — S.S.) is based upon Heb. 2:14; 2Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; 1Pet. 2:24; and Heb. 9:26. The theory is founded upon the thought that sin, as a constitutional thing, in its secondary and derived sense, 'sin in the flesh,' must be condemned in the nature that sinned in the garden of Eden..."

A.D. Strickler continued on for a page and one half expounding the Atonement as understood by Christadelphians, before launching into his own ideas which he called: "The next theory, we may speak of as theory No. 2." His theory, for that is truly what it is, shows a different conception of the "devil," stating that "that having the power of death, unforgiven sin, which is the devil, has been brought to nought or rendered powerless by forgiveness, covering, pardon" (page 38). Again on page 52, he wrote: "Death to hold as an everlasting possession had lost its power, because its sting, sin (diabolos), had been destroyed..." Hence he taught that "transgression" is the "devil" of the Bible.

The True Definition of the Diabolos, or "Devil"

His understanding is at variance with the definition of the "devil" in the *Declaration*, proposition 23, which defines Christadelphian belief that the devil "is a scriptural personification of sin in the flesh, in its several phases of manifestation...after the style of metaphor which speaks of wisdom as a woman, riches as MAMMON, and the god of this world, sin, as a master, etc."

The above definition is the correct one because "devil," or "diabolos" in Greek, is from *dia*, "through" and *ballo*, "to throw." It signifies that which throws over, or causes to go over the forbidden line, i.e., the "line" of God's commandments. It is *sin's flesh* which *causes* us to go over the forbidden line (Jas. 1:14), and this is the "devil" of the Bible, as explained in the *Declaration*. On the other hand, "sin" or "transgression" is what we commit when we cross that forbidden line. Hence, strictly speaking, the "devil" is not transgression, but that which causes sin, which is, of course, our human nature. For a full exposition, see Brother Thomas' masterly explanation in "*Herald of the Coming Age*," August, 1853, page 188.

The Seed of the Woman Wounded in the Heel

A.D. Strickler's theory does not accord with the promise in Genesis 3:15. We have always understood that the seed of the woman would be wounded in the heel, which represents the putting to death of Jesus at the crucifixion, but that the wound would be temporary, and because of his perfect righteousness, he would have a title to resurrection (*BASF* clause 8). Hence it was to be but a temporary wound in the heel.

Now compare this clear teaching with the imagined difficulties raised by A.D. Strickler. He wrote on page 50: "But death would have held him [Christ] had he died to satisfy the penalty of death for himself under any kind of condemnation. What is the design of death when it is caused by violence for penalty, or punishment, but to put the victim forever out of existence... no one can die any kind of death as a penalty, condemnation, or whatever words may be used to

express the thought, and be released therefrom. Natural death is not such a penalty or condemnation.” This is mere assumption without foundation.

A.D. Strickler lost his understanding of the reason for Christ’s death. Christ died to declare that flesh and blood is rightly related to death and to declare the righteousness of God. He rose again because of his perfect obedience to the death of the stake, by which the grave could not hold him. Those of Adam’s race who accept the principle of this declaration of God’s righteousness, in faith, can have their sins forgiven. In this sense “our sins are laid upon him” (1Pet. 2:24; *BASF*, clause 12).

His Admission to a Changed Mind

This teacher, who ran well at his beginning, and who many times conversed with Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts, later admitted to a changed mind upon those vital doctrines which he had believed at baptism. He later denied them and yet, at the same time, asserted that he accepted the *BASF*! He stated on page 87: “We will not retort in reference to the quotation made above, for the reason that years ago in our ignorance, in reference to how Christ ‘bare our sins in his own body upon the tree,’ we said practically the same thing ...” On page 90, he gave a possible indication as to how he came to change, when he quoted another writer: “We shall now make a quotation from a pamphlet written by a Christadelphian, and published in 1908 [13 years before his own pamphlet — S.S.], that is in practical agreement with what we have written on the subject in this pamphlet.” Also, in the preface to A.D. Strickler’s pamphlet, he admitted that his teachings are not new, and so he obviously was familiar with previous “clean flesh” writers, and in later years was in harmony with them.

Bro. Strickler Teaches the Error That Man was Created Corruptible

In order to show that *The Christadelphian* magazine did not embrace A.D. Strickler’s teaching, the editor, Bro. Carter reprinted some words and propositions of Bro. Roberts because they are clear and supported by Scripture. In Australia, Bro. Roberts met a man named George Cornish who was trying to subvert the brethren on these very matters. Bro. Roberts wrote: “It is a plausible theory to the effect that we do not inherit death from Adam by any physical law, but merely by denial of access to the tree of life: that the sentence of death took no effect upon Adam’s body, and therefore is not in ours...that our nature is not an unclean and sinful nature; that there is no such thing as sin in the flesh, or sinful flesh, or ‘sin that dwelleth in us’... But this ‘ism’ denies the very first fact of the gospel testimony, that ‘by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin and so death has passed upon all men’...” (*The Christadelphian*, 1937, page 552).

A.D. Strickler also taught that death did not come into the world by sin, but that there are two sorts of death; one he calls natural death, and the other, death as the wages of sin (page 105). Bro. Carter saw the similarity between the doctrine of Cornish and that of Strickler, and republished the comment of Bro. Roberts upon the danger of this teaching: “It reaches these disastrous results **through the apparently harmless idea** that the body of Adam was unaffected by the sentence of death, and that therefore Jesus was pure and holy and good in body as well as in character. Those who are young in the faith are easily carried away by a theory that appears to honour Christ... It pleases inexperience to hear that Christ’s nature was ‘undefiled’ in the days of his flesh, but it is the pleasure

of sentiment as opposed to truth” (emphasis mine, S.S.). In the same article, Bro. Carter included this further comment by Bro. Roberts, which gets at the very core of Strickler’s misunderstanding of the sacrifice of Christ: “God’s method for the return of sinful man to favour required and appointed the putting to death of man’s condemned and evil nature in a representative man of spotless character, whom He should provide, to declare and uphold the righteousness of God...” (page 553). Bro. Roberts appended the following Scripture quotations to demonstrate the truth of this statement: Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14; 1Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:6; Heb. 4:15; John 16: 33; Rom. 3:26.

When A. D. Strickler suggested that there are *two sorts of death*, firstly natural death which Adam was related to from creation, and secondly, death as the wages of sin, he contradicted Scripture which states that “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Rom. 5:12). Scripture is clear that death entered the world of mankind by Adam’s disobedience: “Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife... unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:17, 19). Thus death came by decree extraneously to the nature bestowed upon Adam at his creation, and was not inherent in him before sentence.

Since the events in Eden, death has been a bodily law in mankind, as Paul states in 2Cor. 1:9, “Having the sentence of death in ourselves...” This is why the human body is a body of death requiring redemption, and Christ had this identical body, notwithstanding his spotless character. Paul speaks of “the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). It follows that Christ was himself saved in the redemption he wrought for us. Bro. Carter included these scriptural arguments by Bro. Roberts, along with many others, in *The Christadelphian* article at that time.

Christ the Sin Bearer or Substitute ?

A.D. Strickler saw Christ’s role as a Sin Bearer as purely figurative. He failed to perceive the human body of Christ, with its bias to sin which he inherited from his mother, as being rightly related to death. He failed to perceive that it was in this sense that Christ was a “sin bearer,” and that he bore our sins figuratively. But the human body he bore was not figurative; it was real. Strickler’s error is clearly stated on page 88 of his pamphlet: “...things should be accomplished for those who as sheep have gone astray (1Pet. 2:25), by the means of a human sin bearer. What have we in a sacrificial sin bearer but a highly figurative and symbolic performance.” Again we point out that for the Lord Jesus Christ, the bearing of our sins was figurative, but the bearing of the sin principles of our body was literal, and not figurative. Strickler admitted that bearing our sins can only be figurative, but then strayed off into teaching the error of “Substitution.” He writes on page 89: “As a matter of fact and reality, no one can bear another’s sins; but they can bear the consequences and punishment due for transgression; and it is in this way that the Bible teaches that sins are borne.” In saying that Christ only bore the punishment of our sins teaches that he was our substitute. This is wrong. If it were the case, then we should not have to bear the punishment of our sins because Christ has borne it for us. The fact is Christ was our representative, not our substitute.

Sin which Dwelleth in Me

A.D. Strickler commented upon Paul’s statement in Rom 7:20. He said on pages 82-83: “What Paul speaks of as ‘no good thing’ dwelleth in his flesh, and

'sin dwelling in him' must be the same thing... Why does he call the evil in his flesh sin ? For the simple reason that it is the cause that produces sin. In and of itself it is not sin... The fleshly desires are not in themselves sin, but they produce sin if they are allowed to have rebellious operation." Thus far Strickler is sound. He admitted the evil in flesh is called "sin." Why then deny it is the same in Christ ? He does deny it for he goes on to say: "because he [Christ] with that nature did not serve the law of sin, but fulfilled the law of Righteousness; therefore it could not be said of him, that he had sin dwelling in him as Paul said of himself." Therefore A.D. Strickler declared that Christ did not have the identical nature to Paul, and ourselves, which is wrong. He went on to state: "If human nature is a synonym for sin, and sin for human nature, it must be so in the primary meaning of the word sin... Hence sin as a synonym for human nature must be sin as 'all unrighteousness' and 'transgression of law'." This is quite wrong, and back to front. "Sin" is sometimes used for fallen human nature, which is the cause of the transgression, and on other occasions used for the transgression itself. The context of Scripture decides in each case. Concerning the former, Bro. Carter used an interesting illustration when he visited Australia. The present writer heard him give the following explanation of sin in the metonymical sense. He asked us to imagine a pot on the table containing a deadly poison. If one were to say that there was *death* in the pot, we would understand that there was not literal death in it, but there was a literal substance in it that would cause death.

Similarly, in the human body of all of Adam's descendants, and because of Adam and Eve's first transgression, there is the sentence of sin, called "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3), and whilst this sentence is not literal sin, as transgression, in the body, it is constituted to be the cause of transgression.

Faulty Reasoning

Strickler's pamphlet is characterised by faulty reasoning and shady logic. Consider the following statement which is true. He writes on page 84: "Christ had the same flesh or nature that in all others save himself sinned, therefore it was flesh of sin, of the same kind that sinned in others..." Then he arrives at this conclusion which is contrary to Scripture: "but it was not sinful while he tabernacled in it." If Christ's body was not sinful while he had it, why then did it allow him to be tempted in all points just as are we? Why did the devil appeal to the lusts of the body (albeit unsuccessfully) when Christ was tempted in the wilderness: the lusts of the flesh, of the eyes, and to the pride of life ? What of Heb. 2:14 which states "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same"? Note the reason for this, that being a representative member of the human race, having the same evil human nature as his fellows in the days of his flesh, he could put that human nature to death, which would in fact be the putting to death of the "devil," "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"

In our next article we shall consider further examples of the reasoning which caused departure from sound Scriptural doctrine by Strickler and of those who have embraced his teachings in subsequent years. It is vital that we do not allow a resurgence of such errors, and maintain our responsibility to uphold the Truth as the most important and valued thing we possess.

— Stan Snow.

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days

The Danger of Partial Truth: TROUBLED TIMES FOR THE BROTHERHOOD

A.D. Strickler had a very considerable influence upon the Christadelphian community in North America, and further afield, but not in the way in which he intended. He wrote that he felt "it a duty and privilege to help in the movement," and yet he hindered brethren's understanding of the principles of Christ's sacrifice by the publication in 1921 of his booklet *Out of darkness into Light*. He was an earnest brother, held in high esteem by those around him, who had conversed with brethren Thomas and Roberts, and who, in later years, maintained that he now knew better than they, stating that "It is what your leaders have taught you; you have allowed those leaders to do your thinking" (*Out of Darkness into Light*, page 69). He clearly differed with us in his understanding of the Atonement, yet he confused the issues by *positively maintaining that he accepted the Birmingham Amended statement of Faith*.

In this article we give further illustrations of the lack of clear thinking that gave rise to his departure from sound scriptural doctrine, and which caused him to fulfil the title of his booklet, by passing from *light* into *darkness* !

Defective Reasoning Revealed

On page 43 of his booklet, he wrote: "If the condemnation of sin in the flesh must be understood in its physical sense or aspect, then was an innocent person put to death, for it was Christ who suffered, and that too, for something he inherited from Adam."

Now an innocent man *was* put to death, for the nature borne by the Lord was, as with all of Adam's race, his misfortune, not his crime. But although innocent of any personal transgression, he was *not* devoid of the sin-biased nature which we all bear, and he was willing to lay down his life to demonstrate that all human bodies are rightly related to death. Bro. Thomas expressed as: "Man, originally 'upright' has lost his integrity, and is defiled. He is therefore essentially the opposite of holiness..." (*Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, Aug. 1853, page 170).

A.D.Strickler continues: "Furthermore, if men deserve to die because they have 'sin in the flesh,' then Christ, 'a partaker of flesh and blood,' also deserved to die, and therefore in his death he only suffered what he deserved to suffer, and so his resurrection would have been impossible."

He is not reasoning clearly here. Men don't *deserve* to die because of their inherited natures, or bodies. But the fact is they *are* dying, and this is their misfortune, not their crime. We are culpable for our transgressions, but not for our sin-inclined bodies. To say that the resurrection of Christ was impossible because of his sin nature, contradicts the Scripture, which states that "Whom God hath

raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because *it was not possible that he should be holden of it*" (Acts 2:24). Our *Statement of Faith* states that "he was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience" (clause 8). His resurrection was not only possible, but certain, because of his perfect obedience. He volunteered to go onto the stake to declare the principle that the body needed redemption, and we also groan because we are "*waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Rom 8:23). Christ, himself, obtained this redemption (Heb. 9:12), which certainly was *not* for his character or actions which were perfect, but for his body, which was sin-biased like ours.

The Curse of Death

On page 44, A.D. Strickler writes of the curse of death "*whether Jew or Gentile, because upon all rests a curse of death for sin in its moral or primary sense... because God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ in its moral sense.*"

This, however, does not accord with Scripture which states that "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom 4:15). Hence amongst the ignorant nations, who are without God's Law, there cannot be a *moral* accountability, but rather the sin nature possessed by them all is putting them into the grave. To say that God condemned sin in its *moral* sense in Jesus overlooks the fact that there was *no moral* shortcoming in the Lord at all. On the other hand his body *was* the same as ours, and not "good" like Adam's before the fall (Mat. 19:17; Mk. 10:18; Lk. 18:19).

Defining the Terms

Errorists such as A.D. Strickler of the U.S.A, and John Bell of Sydney, Australia, have adopted *variations* of the teaching originally put forward in 1873 by E.W.Turney in the U.K. Over time a phrase has been coined by Christadelphian writers to describe these erroneous ideas; we have come to use the broad or generic term "*The Clean Flesh Theory.*" E.W. Turney renounced the first century teaching of the apostles, revived by Bro. Thomas in the nineteenth century, concerning the sacrifice of Christ, and was re-baptised into his new beliefs. Hence he and his supporters became known as the "*Renunciationists.*" He taught that man's physical state remained unchanged in Eden, so that today we are in the same condition of flesh as were Adam and Eve before they sinned. This original state is described in Genesis 1:31 as "very good," hence the caption of "Clean Flesh Theory." For a fuller description of Turney's history and teaching, see *Logos*, vol. 63, No. 1 (Oct. 1996), and vol. 64, No. 4 (Jan. 1998) onwards.

Quoting Bro. Thomas

Since the days of E.W. Turney, some of those adopting his ideas in whole or part, have quoted Bro. Thomas in an effort to set Bro. Roberts and Bro. Thomas at variance. In a vain effort to demonstrate that Bro. Thomas taught that man's physical state remained unchanged by Adam's sin, they quote his writings from *The Herald of the Kingdom*, where, in answer to a correspondent, he wrote "There was no miracle wrought in executing the sentence under which Adam and Eve placed themselves. That is to say that there was no physical principle infused into their nature that wasn't there before they transgressed. From this premise it will be seen that we dissent from our correspondent's 'notion' that all creation

became corrupt (by which we understand him to mean, constitutionally impregnated with corruptibility) at the fall. We believe that the change consequent upon the calamity was moral, not physical. The natural system was the same the day before the fall as the day after."

Taken at face value, this appears to support what the errorists are saying. But a moment's reflection will reveal that Bro. Roberts *never* had such glaring differences with Bro. Thomas on matters of essential doctrine. What then is Bro. Thomas saying?

The key is in the context of Bro. Thomas' reply. The correspondent was maintaining that Adam and Eve were not capable of *corruption* before the fall, and seems to have imagined that Adam before the fall was not even capable of dying. It is true that Adam was not subject to death before the fall, but he was not immortal either. And if he was not immortal, then he was capable of dying. After the fall he *was dying*. Bro. Thomas stressed that Adam was not physically incorruptible, that is to say, he was not physically immortal before the fall. This is the physical change of which he was speaking at the time. In effect, Bro. Thomas affirmed that Adam was an earthy, flesh and blood creature before the fall, and he was an earthy, flesh and blood creature after the fall. There was no physical difference in this regard. The natural system (flesh and blood) was the same the day before the Fall as the day after (still flesh and blood).

The Way in Which the Change Occurred

However, Bro. Thomas is not saying that there was no change in Adam, for he expounded in *Elpis Israel* concerning the constitution of man so vividly and with such care and scriptural support. The Fall changed man's constitution into a "constitution of sin." He was now not only capable of death, but subject to death; mortal and dying, having brought this change *upon himself* by transgressing God's Law. Clean Flesh writers have maintained that: "to say that God condemned human nature is to say that He condemned His own created product." Not so. God did not create the Devil. The Devil, being sinful human nature, was only brought about in Adam by his *own* disobedience. Humanity is not now the way God created it. Adam's disobedience has "bent" or "twisted" his nature, and that of his progeny. Obedience would have left Adam "unbent" or good. When we mistreat our bodies, how can we attribute to Yahweh the deleterious effects produced by our folly?

Jesus, the Sin Bearer

On page 44 of his booklet, A.D. Strickler reasons that "Christ 'became a curse;' he could not be a curse without sin; sin could not be condemned in him unless he had it. How did he have it? By inheritance? No. By transgression? No. The answer is by becoming a sin-offering, a sin-bearer...' Who 'his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree'(1Pet. 2:24)." He continues by quoting from the Law of Moses, concerning the custom of laying the hand upon the animal victim, which was offered up to death for sin, and concludes by stating that "it is proven that sins are borne by being transferred from the sinner to the victim by the contact of the hand and confession of sins."

What can we make of his reasoning here? Firstly he has not proved that Christ had no "sin;" i.e., sin's flesh, by inheritance. It is accepted that Christ bare our sins in a figurative sense (see *B.A.S.F.* Clause 12). But if Christ bore our sins in

a literal sense, then he was our substitute, which is quite wrong. He represented us on the stake. If he were our substitute, then we need not die, for he has done it for us. Sins are transferred from sinner to victim in the ritual of the Law only in type.

Laid on Him the Iniquity of Us All

But, on page 47, he adopts a different rendering of Isa 53:6, which reads in the A.V.: “Yahweh hath laid on him the *iniquity* of us all.” He prefers the translation “*punishment*” of us all, in an effort to make Christ our substitute, taking upon himself the punishment due to us. He cannot accept that Christ took upon himself by birth, our iniquitous bodily nature in accordance with God’s plan of salvation. The Hebrew word for “iniquity” is *avon*, given by Strong as “perversity,” a true description of human nature since the Fall. It is from a Hebrew root “to crook,” translated “to make crooked, perverted, perverse, etc.” Gesenius gives the meaning as “perversity, depravity... also anything unjustly acquired.” All of these definitions can fairly be applied to the Adamic nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though personally sinless, came in our crooked, distorted, sinful, bodily nature, and demonstrated by volunteering to lay down his life, that all flesh and blood is now rightly related to death. The Hebrew original of Isa. 53:6 supports this contention.

To ascribe an unclean human body to Jesus in the days of his flesh does not dishonour him. A correct understanding of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus magnifies the honour due to him. Notwithstanding the body with a bias toward sin he shared in common with the rest of the Adamic race, he overcame that disability with God’s help (Psa. 80:17). It was a wonderful victory. Adam, with the benefits of a very good bodily condition (Gen. 1:31), did not overcome. Jesus, with the great encumbrance of sin’s flesh (Heb. 2:14), overcame completely. He is truly worthy of all honour, and indeed “Worthy is the Lamb” (Rev 5:12).

Confused Reasoning

A.D.Strickler maintained that he supported our *Statement of Faith*. Consider however, page 50 of his booklet. “There is not a single statement anywhere in either the Old or New Testaments that Christ died for his own ‘sin in the flesh’.” Then, remarkably, in the very next sentence, he provides an example of such a passage of Scripture himself from Romans! He quotes: “For in that he died, he died unto sin once” (Rom. 6:10).

In considering Rom. 6:10, we point out that Christ committed no transgression of any kind, and so the only sense in which he personally was related to sin was in the nature he bore along with the rest of our race. But A.D. Strickler reasons “Reason dictates that we should understand that Christ died unto the demands of sin, which was death as wages.” How, we ask, could Christ personally earn the wages of sin? He had no transgression. We could multiply examples from Scripture to show the relationship between Christ’s death and his Adamic sin-nature (body). The case of Moses setting up the serpent on a pole (Num. 21:8), clearly points to Christ (John 3:14), which because he had no transgression, could only refer to his Adamic nature. This condition was the basic cause of impulse to sin in the Children of Israel then, and in ourselves now.

Consider Paul in Hebrews “unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). Now, Christ did not have sin (transgression) the *first time* he appeared. Hence it must refer to his sin-biased Adamic nature, which, when he comes the second time, he will be “without.”

In light of the above assertion by A.D. Strickler, that the Bible does not teach that Christ’s death was associated with his own “sin in the flesh,” and that therefore A.D. Strickler does not accept that it was, how can he maintain that he supports our Statement of Faith? Clause 12 of the *B.A.S.F.* includes: “*in the hands of God, for the doing of that which He had before determined to be done – viz., the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all...*” (see also clause 8).

— *Stan Snow. [To be continued].*

An Appeal to Preserve the Truth in the Last Days — 7.

They Imagine They Honour Christ

IN *The Christadelphian* editorial, July, 1921, p. 313, the editor, Bro. C.C. Walker wrote of those who “Thinking to ‘honour the Son,’ some have exalted him above humanity, and thus taken him out of the human harvest as ‘the firstfruit.’ As is the firstfruit, so is the harvest. And as is the harvest, so is the firstfruit. ‘Man’ in each case, as Paul declared to the Corinthians, and as such, needing salvation. It had been written in the prophets (Zech. 9:9) ‘Behold, thy king cometh unto thee (O daughter of Zion). He is just, and having salvation.’ The salvation was by ‘the blood of thy covenant’ (verse 11), by which both the ‘King’ himself and his ‘prisoners of hope’ are ‘brought again from the dead.’ These things have been faithfully upheld as principles of the Truth from the beginning, and contradictory teaching has not been tolerated and should not be now. Yet there is such current.”

Bro. Walker was responding to the “Truth nullifying pamphlet,” entitled *Out of Darkness into Light*, that had been published that year by A.D. Strickler. As has been pointed out in this present series of articles, the writings of A.D. Strickler are characterised by doubts and uncertainties of every kind, which caused him to write: “to insist upon any one of the many theories and doctrines which have been floated and propounded [i.e., concerning the sacrifice of Christ, S.S.] is... to trifle with one’s destiny.”

The Scriptures give no such uncertain sound as this. Paul *insisted* upon an understanding and upholding of true doctrine (Gal. 1:8), and the apostle John likewise (2John 1:10). Uncertainty is not a trait of true disciples of Christ. Mark the words of Paul: “If the trumpet give an **uncertain sound**, who shall prepare himself to the battle” (1Cor. 14:8).

Foreseeing the danger that many younger or inexperienced members of the Household might be led astray, which sadly proved to be the case, a Bro. B.J. Dowling, of Worcester Mass. Ecclesia (USA), wrote supporting Bro. Walker, stating that the author of the erroneous pamphlet “is without doubt the biggest theological acrobat that has ever entered the Christadelphian arena.” (*The Christadelphian*, Sept. 1921, page 403).

What of Today?

In *The Christadelphian* editorial, July 1921, page 314, Bro. Walker wrote of his concern for the new generation of Christadelphians, stating that “The rising generation knows but little of the ‘earnest contention’ that has been necessary to preserve ‘the Truth,’ and is quite liable to take wrong views.”

A further eighty one years have passed, and these sentiments are even more

applicable to our days. Brethren and sisters of previous generations have, in some cases, given their very life's energies to preserve the Truth in its purity *for us*. It behoves us to do our part to preserve it for the next generation, or until the Lord shall come. *This is why we write these articles* — to prevent Stricklerism, Andrewism, or any other "ism" from leading our new generation astray.

The Death on the Cross

On page 94 of his booklet, A.D. Strickler maintains, "*He [Christ] was not by nature related to the death upon the cross.*" This is not true. Jesus *was* rightly related to the death upon the cross in one respect, and that is in regard to his *bodily nature*. He was *not* related to the death upon the cross in regard to his *character*, and *deeds*. Bro. Thomas made this apt comment in *Elpis Israel*: "because sin was to be condemned in sinful flesh..." and again: "The great principle to be compassed was *the condemnation of sin in sinful flesh, innocent of actual transgression*" (page 164, *Logos* ed.).

As we have repeatedly pointed out, the displaying of the serpent upon the pole in the wilderness by Moses was applied *by the Lord, to himself* (Num. 21:8; John 3:14). The serpent represented that which has the power of death, defined as the "devil" in Heb. 2:14. The literal serpent had the power of death to Israel in the wilderness, and represents the devil, which is the scriptural personification of sin's flesh (Heb. 2:14, see *The Declaration*," proposition 23). Thus when the Lord saw *himself* in type on the pole in the wilderness, he saw his *bodily nature* there for all to see and ponder. Since crucifixion is a *criminal's* death, it could not have depicted Christ's character, for there was nothing criminal about his mind and deeds. But his *body* had a *tendency to rebellion*, because he was of Adam's race, although in his case, he did not let it lead to rebellion, for he always did those things which pleased his heavenly Father (John 8:29).

In *The Christadelphian*, January, 1874, page 39, the following succinct but important extract appeared

"The Brazen Serpent"

"The brazen serpent was but a type... The brass placed upon the top of the pole was first worked into the shape of the serpents that bit the children of Israel, to intimate (though that generation did not understand the intimation) that the death bite of sin was to be affected by impaling on a cross the nature that had inflicted this bite — or to use the words of Paul, 'condemning sin in the flesh:' 'destroying through death that having the power of death.' It would not have been suitable to have placed a living serpent on the pole; for this would have intimated that the deliverer was to be an actual transgressor: an impossibility. His sinlessness was the great necessity: his participation in the condemned nature was the next necessity. The first signified by the lifelessness of the brass; the second by the serpent shape of the metal."

For What are We Baptised?

Bro. H.P. Mansfield wrote in *Logos*, Jan. 1971, page 135: "*Some teach that we are baptised for our nature, and that the act of baptism takes us 'out of Adam into Christ.'* Such an expression develops out of the concept that the defilement inherited from Adam is legal and not physical. Whilst baptism comprises a step that can ultimately 'take us out of Adam,' this latter consummation will not be reached until we are changed into immortality..."

Then Bro. Mansfield quoted Bro. Roberts from *The Christadelphian*, 1896, page 382: “Men were baptised in the apostolic age for the remission of their individual sins — always ... never for condemnation in Adam.”

Why was Jesus Baptised of John?

Bro. Thomas wrote concerning the propriety of Jesus' own baptism. Amongst the various reasons given for it, he included the following “His character was spotless; but as being the seed of the woman, of whom no clean flesh can be born (Job 25:4)... his nature was flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14) which Paul styles ‘sinful flesh’ ... ‘God made Jesus sin for us, who knew no sin’ (2Cor. 5:21)... In this view of the matter, the Sin Bearer of the world indicated was a fit and proper subject of John’s baptism.” (Christadelphian Bookshelf CD).

In *The Christadelphian*, Jan. 1874, page 30, Bro. Roberts included an article on the baptism of Jesus, which included the following: “It is worthy of notice that when Jesus Christ was immersed, he said ‘Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness’.” The use of the plural pronoun shows that he was speaking of others beside himself. There must, therefore, be some sense in which they and he are all alike. What was that? In the possession of an unclean nature; for in character they were not alike. Bro. Roberts continues: “Then, referring to the washing of priests under the Law, the article continues ‘The garments were too ‘holy’ to come in contact with Levitical flesh until it had been washed. On the same principle, Jesus Christ required his flesh to be washed before being anointed as a priest. His flesh would not have been unclean if it had been like Adam’s before the fall; therefore his compliance with this ordinance is evidence that his flesh was unclean on account of Adam’s sin’.”

On the other hand, A.D. Strickler took a different view, which was characteristic of his extreme teaching, for he could not see any relationship whatsoever between the baptism of Jesus and the Adamic bodily nature he possessed along with the rest of our race. He questioned: “Where is the remotest justification for such a conclusion in view of the fact that baptism was instituted for moral results and purification?” In reply, we point out that Paul in Rom. 6:3 informs us that “as we were baptised into Jesus Christ we were baptised into his death.” Therefore Christ in his own baptism, recognised his death in his baptism, as being necessary to fulfil all righteousness. His death could not have been for personal transgressions, and could only have been related to his Adamic body, which was rightly related to death. Christ’s death was the final act in the putting to death once and for all, the **devil** (sinful physical human nature; Heb. 2:14) — it was the final destruction of the devil as far as he personally was concerned.

The Destruction of the Devil

“Devil,” is the English translation of the Greek *diabolos*, which in turn comes from two Greek words: *dia* meaning “through” and *ballo* meaning “to throw.” It refers to sinful human nature, which tends to throw us across God’s forbidden line. Jesus recognised this only too well, and knew that “all flesh is grass” (Isa. 40:6; 1Pet. 1:24), and this certainly included his own flesh, which, like the grass,

Christ’s death was the final act in the putting to death once and for all, of the devil (sinful physical human nature; Heb. 2:14) — it was the final destruction of the devil as far as he personally was concerned

had no permanence and was destined to die. Again we repeat, that the baptism of Jesus was, *into his death*. He was the sin-bearer of the world. The *moral* results of baptism have to do with *ourselves*, and the lives we live subsequent to it.

A.D. Strickler perceives only part of the truth when he says that the *only* reason for Jesus' baptism was "*Jesus as an obedient Jew would desire to obey this ordinance or ritual, even though he knew that he had committed no sins to be remitted.*" (page 100). His statement is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Jesus did indeed submit to baptism as an act of obedience, unlike the Pharisees who rejected the counsel of God (Lk. 7:29-30). A.D. Strickler continues, and comes a little closer to embracing the whole truth, but stops short of it, leaving out the significance of Christ's baptism to himself and his own relationship to it, when he writes "As John's baptism was for the remission of sins, it was quite appropriate that the one whose blood was to be shed for that object should be there present, and make a close connection with his coming death, by a figure and symbol of his own death; therefore in connection with his baptism...." (page 100). *He could see that Christ's baptism symbolised his death, but he could not see the reason for his death, namely, that the Lord's body was rightly related to death and needed redemption.* This vital element of truth has been part of Christadelphian teaching since the days of *Elpis Israel*.

Avoiding Extremes when Contending for Truth

Digressing for a moment to make an important observation, we point out that when combating error, it is so easy to take an extreme position in trying to establish a matter. Bro. Roberts was exceptional in his ability to avoid this mistake. When questioned in the course of his debate with J.J. Andrew (who had adopted an extreme and opposite doctrine to the Clean Flesh heresy; see *The Atonement*, pp. 85-153), Bro. Roberts answered advisedly. Bro. Andrew asked *concerning baptism*: "Is not 'sin in the flesh' the subject of justification at baptism?" Bro. Roberts replied, "**No, it will be at the resurrection.**" (Question # 241). Bro. Andrew later asked, referring to the Law of Moses: "Does it not teach that the sin nature, which in the first instance has no moral guilt, requires blood shedding in order that it may be cleansed or justified? Bro. Roberts answered: "*Blood shedding is never spoken of except in connection with actual sin*" (Question # 406). Later in the debate, Bro. Roberts qualified his understanding when asked: "Is it not clear that Christ, as a necessity, must offer up for himself for the purging of his own sin nature? Bro. Roberts answered "*As a son of Adam, a son of Abraham, and a son of David, yes.*" (Question # 711). He was then asked: "How could Jesus have been made free from that sin which God laid upon him in his own nature, 'made in the likeness of sinful flesh,' if he had not died for himself as well as for us?" Bro. Roberts answered: "*He could not*" (Question # 715). Again he was asked "Is it not clear then from this that the death of Christ was necessary to purify his own nature from the sin power?" Bro. Roberts answered "**Certainly**" (Question # 717).

We see from the brief foregoing references, that Bro. Roberts, founder and first editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine, would not allow himself to be diverted either to right or left when debating scriptural matters. He would not allow the erroneous teaching of J.J. Andrew, who taught that God considered the physical sinful human nature to be so abhorrent that it alienated Him even from

His only begotten Son, Jesus. The truth is that alienation is a moral state, not a physical one. Nor would Bro. Roberts tolerate the opposite extreme, the error of E.W. Turney, later taken up in part by A.D. Strickler, who taught that Christ's human nature did not make him unclean, and that he did not die for himself as well as for us, and therefore it would follow that Jesus was not a true representative of our race. The apostle Paul makes clear that Jesus was a true representative of our race (Heb. 2:14). Bro. H.P. Mansfield wisely observed: *"The uncleanness of the Lord... was physical and not moral; but ours is both."* He also wrote: *"The altar prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ."* *"The altar had to be cleansed, atoned, sanctified, anointed (Exo. 29:36-37). As it typed the Lord Jesus, it is obvious that he was involved in his own sacrifice. He had to be cleansed from the flesh nature and clothed upon with Spirit Nature, and this was effected through his offering. (The Power of the Altar, from Logos volume, The Atonement, pp. 185-186).*

Epilogue

As we observed at the commencement of this series of articles, A.D. Strickler's writings have been the cause of much strife, contention, and division in the Brotherhood. It is a matter of regret that the labours of the closing years of one so long associated with the Truth and so beloved by his companions should have produced these results. A.D. Strickler now sleeps, until the coming of the Lord who will judge us all. Meanwhile we have the responsibility to uphold the Truth in its saving power. We have the heritage of champions of Truth that have gone before: such men as Bro. Thomas who *unearthed* the Truth from beneath mountains of clerical teaching that had hidden it for centuries, and Bro. Roberts, who organised the ecclesias, and fought valiantly to prevent the encroachment of error. In recent times Bro. H.P. Mansfield, by word and pen, put forth Herculean efforts over a lifetime to generating a love and deeper understanding of Yahweh's Word in many people in many places all over the world.

But the struggle is not over. It behoves us to continue the work begun, to "earnestly contend for the faith"(Jude 3). This is life eternal, and a responsibility to do our own small part in the great work.(John 17:3). Let each one of us endeavour to be a faithful and wise Antipas (Rev. 2:13), in the day of opportunity.

— Stan Snow.

CHARACTER, NOT OPINIONS — The interval between believing the gospel and being baptized, and our departure hence, must be occupied in forming our characters after the model of Jesus; 'who is the exact representation of the character of God,' and therefore, the very best after which we can aspire. Character and not opinions will be the test of our admission into the Kingdom of God; let us form, then, such a character as we have delineated in the Lamb's Book of Life — the New Testament; and be assured, whether our names be repudiated by our contemporaries, or ourselves persecuted to the deprivation of the means of subsistence, we shall be invested with incorruptible life, and crowned with glory and honor in the future age." —J.T.