

Quick Reference for Divisions which created the Various Christadelphian Groups

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The Berean Christadelphians

Why the Bereans?

This page will contain a history of the Christadelphians as it pertains to the Berean fellowship, along with specific doctrines which separate us from other Christadelphian groups. It is not my intention to ridicule or denigrate, *in any way*, the other Christadelphian groups. Neither do I seek to label everyone in certain groups to have some specific belief. I know there are Christadelphians in all the different groups who still hold the Foundation Truths themselves, while fellowshipping the error in their respective group. There is also a new development among Christadelphians in general where apparently faithful brethren are refusing to align themselves with any one group, claiming to accept only those who believe the truth, and refusing fellowship to all others. For lack of a better name, and because of it's historical significance, I will call them Nicodemian brethren. They believe the truth correctly, but will not take a stand, "for fear of the Jews."

I hope no one will consider any of the things I say to be mean-spirited, for that is not my intent. My intent is only to explain the reasons why I am a Berean Christadelphian, and why I believe those who are earnestly striving to obey the Commands of Christ our Lord should make the same choice I have made.

I will not go into the personality conflicts involved in the divisions, or the dealings between brethren which were not always altogether brotherly. Like everyone else, Christadelphians are of human nature, and human nature is a terrible thing. No doubt, some men made fellowship decisions in the past based upon the personalities involved, and based on the conduct of certain brethren. I know this occurred. I believe this to be wrong. The Truth is the Truth, regardless of who is presenting it. For this brief history, I will stick only to the factual material.

Section One: The Resistance of Error

From the Renunciators (1872) through the Shield (1902)

The doctrine that sets Christadelphians apart from all the churches of Christendom is the nature of man, and the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ. There are churches that have discovered **some** of the Bible's Truth. Some know that the Bible does not teach the soul is immortal. Some know that the Bible does not teach the kingdom will be established in heaven, but rather on the earth. Still others know that the Bible does not teach anything about people burning for eternity in a fiery-burning hell. But there are no churches in Christendom that have correctly understood the most important subject of all Bible subjects; the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ. Not surprisingly then, this subject has been the greatest cause of division among Christadelphians.

Rom. 8:3 reads:

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:"

Commenting on this in his book "[Elpis Israel](#)", John Thomas wrote:

*Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature. Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean. It is therefore written, "How can he be clean who is born of a woman?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "What is man that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, God putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?" This view of sin in the flesh is enlightening in the things concerning Jesus. The apostle says, "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin"; and this he explains in another place by saying, that "He sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" in the offering of his body once. *Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, if it had not existed there.* His body was as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died; for he was born of a woman, and "not one" can bring a clean body out of a defiled body; for "that", says Jesus himself, "which is born of the flesh is flesh".*

According to this physical law, the Seed of the woman was born into the world. The nature of Mary was as unclean as that of other women; and therefore could give birth only to "a body" like her own, though especially "prepared of God". Had Mary's nature been immaculate, as her idolatrous worshippers contend, an immaculate body would have been born of her; which, therefore, would not have answered the purpose of God; which was to condemn sin in the flesh; **a thing that could not have been accomplished, if there were no sin there.**

These paragraphs are both obvious and profound. The closer a person comes to understanding this, the closer they come to understanding the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on behalf of all mankind.

Renunciationists

John Thomas died in 1871. By 1872, this principle, which he had so simply and thoroughly explained, came directly under attack by some of his former friends. In 1872 Edward Turney issued a booklet called "The Sacrifice of Christ." In it was the following statement:

"...(Another man has said) that for 15 years he has not been able to understand what Dr. Thomas meant by 'sin in the flesh.' That is the fixation of sin in the flesh which he speaks of in 'Elpis Israel' pg. 126, ...and I confess to you without reserve, neither have I been able to understand it. But still I have many a time taught it. I have taken the 15th article of the book of common prayer and pulled it to pieces, and said that Christ came in flesh full of sin; for said I to the people, what can 'sinful flesh' mean, but flesh full of sin? Well now, since my mind has been more especially directed to the study of this subject, I have arrived at this conviction that there is no such thing as flesh full of sin, and never was, nor can be." "Sacrifice of Christ," pg. 16.

Edward Turney reasoned that since Christ had only a human mother, his nature could not be the same identical nature as ours, since we have both human father and mother. He argued that since his nature was not the same as ours, Jesus did not have a sinful nature, and therefore did not offer for himself for the cleansing of that nature.

Edward Turney reintroduced to Christadelphians the idea that sin can only be moral. He agreed that man had sinful flesh, but he saw this as a moral transgression, just like the churches doctrine of original sin. He reasoned that if Christ had been born with this original sin, or sinful flesh, he would be condemned by it, and therefore not be in position to free us from sin.

Edward Turney was very clear that he was renouncing Christadelphian teaching. Therefore, his group came to be called the Renunciationists. He stated in his book:

"I have renounced the Papal myth of "sin in the flesh" by which Mr. Roberts [then editor of the Christadelphian Magazine] is yet bewitched..." "Sacrifice of Christ," by Edward Turney pg. 34

Since he plainly, and boldly, renounced Christadelphian thought, he found it difficult to get a following among Christadelphians. Christadelphians called his teaching "clean flesh", because he taught the flesh of Christ was clean, while all the rest of mankind had sinful flesh. As a movement, he was so insignificant we would not bother with mentioning him, except that he introduced a thought that was the cause of much sorrow and division in the following years.

Many sound men rose up to show Edward Turney that his new ideas were unsound: that it was he who had returned to the doctrine of Catholicism (the Catholic doctrine of an immaculate Christ) not Christadelphians. Among these was a very polished man named J. J. Andrew of London, England.

As we mentioned, fundamental to Turney's teaching was the argument that "sin" was a moral relationship, **only**. He argued that sin could have no physical existence. Christadelphians taught that sin was both moral and physical. We are guilty of the things we do (the moral aspect of sin) but

we suffer the consequences of the sin bodies we physically and literally bare, (sorrow, weakness, and death). The moral aspect of sin is a crime. The physical aspect is a misfortune, not a crime, but it is a **reality** none the less. Jesus came into the world bearing the physical sin in his body that through his sacrifice he might destroy sin at its very root, removing all sin, physical and moral, that the world might be purified from sin.

The physical sin body is the root of all moral transgression. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James. 1:14) By destroying sin in his body, Christ destroyed all sin at its very root and source.

Advocates

As the two debated the subject, J. J. Andrew himself departed from sound Christadelphian teachings. He had correctly understood the force of Paul's argument that sin had to exist in the body of Jesus, or, as John Thomas said, it could not have been condemned there. But Turney's arguments that sin can be only moral and cannot be physical, confused J. J. Andrew and led him to consider the possession of sinful flesh to be a moral (he liked the term legal) sin, not much different than the churches doctrine of "Original Sin" which Edward Turney had re-introduced.

J. J. Andrew began to teach that we are "guilty" of Adam's sin, that Christ (since he too, had this moral "sin in the flesh") was therefore born guilty of Adam's sin, and a "child of wrath".

As he went on to develop and expand his thoughts, he eventually concluded that since we are all born **guilty** of Adam's sin, no one can come out of the grave to judgment who has not been cleansed from Adam's sin by baptism. (This happens to be the same reason that the churches baptize babies. Many churches of Christendom also believe that we are born "guilty" of Adam's sin, and that a baby must be baptized to be "forgiven" it.)

The established Christadelphian position was that it was "light" which made a person responsible to come out of the grave to judgment, not baptism. "Light" is not defined by Christadelphians. It is a metaphor for knowledge and understanding. Only God knows when a person has sufficient understanding of His plan to be responsible for his actions at the judgment seat of Christ. Refusing baptism will not hinder a man (who had "light") coming forth from the grave.

In 1894 J. J. Andrew began insisting that all in his ecclesia embrace his views. This led to a long discussion among Christadelphians, a **debate** between J. J. Andrew and the Christadelphian Magazine editor Robert Roberts, and ultimately a division. The point of the controversy can be seen in the following questions from the debate.

(J. J. Andrew) I am speaking about the moral. Is not "sin in the flesh" the subject of justification in a moral or legal sense (I think legal is better)?

(R. Roberts) You are mixing up two terms. "Sin in the flesh" is a physical attribute, forgiveness is a moral relation. Do not confound the two. "Resurrectional Responsibility Debate". Q. 270.

(J. J. Andrew) "Is "sin in the flesh" the subject of justification through the blood of Christ?"

(R. Roberts) "It will be ultimately."

(J. J. Andrew) "Is it now?"

(R. Roberts) "No; we have it with us now."

(J. J. Andrew) "Is that proof that it is not the subject of justification?"

(R. Roberts) "It depends upon what you mean by justification; there are different kinds of justification, moral and physical."

(J. J. Andrew) "I defined the term. I said acquittal from actual or imputed guilt." "Res. Resp. Debate". Q. 111-114.

In the above, one can see the conflict between Christadelphian teaching and the new teaching of J. J. Andrew. To Andrew "sin in the flesh" was actual, or imputed guilt. It was moral, or legal. To Robert Roberts, it was a physical attribute, not needing forgiveness, but simply needing cleansing.

Turney and Andrew had started from the same erroneous point, and reached opposite conclusions. Turney said all sin is moral, and there is no such thing as physical sin; therefore, there is no such thing as "sin in the flesh." Andrew agreed with him that all sin was moral, but reached an opposite conclusion: possessing "sin in the flesh" was a moral crime.

The men who followed J. J. Andrew took the name "Advocates," and in some areas were called "Suffolk Street". This group of Christadelphians exists today, mostly in the USA, but are normally referred to as "Unamended Christadelphians". The reasons for these various names will be explained later.

Shield

During the J. J. Andrew discussions, it was clear there were (again) groups of individuals who were going to miss the center ground of Christadelphian belief. These men had argued so hard against J. J. Andrew that they took an opposite extreme from J. J. Andrew, back to the teachings of Edward Turney, only not going as far as Turney. And further, instead of the problems being confined to England, this new problem had now expanded to all continents where there were Christadelphians.

These new teachers were quickly labeled as teaching "clean flesh", like Turney, but the label was confusing. Turney taught that Jesus had a different nature from the rest of human kind. To him, mankind had a defiled, sinful nature, (being guilty of Adam's sin) but Jesus' nature was "clean", or undefiled. This new group of men taught that Jesus' nature and mankind's nature were identical, but neither were sinful. They embraced the foundation principle of both Turney and Andrew, arguing that sin is moral, not physical. They concluded, therefore, that sinful flesh really cannot be considered sinful in any real sense.

To this new group of men, the term "sinful flesh" was not a literal description of the physical condition of human nature as taught by the pioneer Christadelphians, nor was it guilt inherited from Adam as taught by Turney and Andrew, but rather only a symbolical expression. To them the flesh

was not sin, but only symbolized sin. To them, Jesus did not destroy sin literally on the cross (as Christadelphians had taught), but symbolically destroyed sin through a symbolical sacrifice.

The problem first broke out in England in 1898, in the teachings of Harold Fry. It was quickly **resolved** by his meeting, and it had little effect. Shortly after the resolution of this problem, editor Robert Roberts died. It next broke out in 1902 in the teachings of John Bell in Australia. A division ensued and a new group of Christadelphians was formed, calling themselves the "Shield"

Section Two: The Corruption of the Body.

The Formation of the Bereans and the relationship of Bereans to Central from 1923 to present Bereans/Central

In 1923 the same problem broke out in the United States in the teachings of A. D. Strickler. Strickler denied that the physical nature was of itself, sin. He wrote:

"Why does he [Paul] 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... 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. It cannot be sin as a concrete physical thing, "sin in the flesh", or sin as a metaphor, because that is human nature itself considered as a moral thing. "Out of Darkness, Into Light" pg. 84 .

And again from the same book:

"Just before Christ was nailed to the tree, he was a clean and holy altar, but immediately when he willingly took the attitude or position of the sinner to work out a symbolism, he symbolically became unclean because of the sins which he bore as the sin offering, and whose blood was sprinkled upon the Christ altar. When he arose from the dead triumphant on the third day, he was only justified from all symbolic and figurative uncleanness; but he was the same clean and holy altar that he had been before he was crucified...." "Out of Darkness, Into Light" pg. 64.

Like those before him, A. D. Strickler believed that sin can only be moral, and that atonement is only for moral transgression. He could not consider the physical principle, sin in the flesh, to be actually sinful, for as he said, that would be considering "sin in the flesh" as a moral thing.

This inevitably created another division within the body, but a different one than any before. Overwhelmingly, the United States brethren withdrew fellowship from A. D. Strickler and his followers. "The Christadelphian Magazine", and many brethren in England refused to acknowledge this withdrawal. Unwilling to fellowship either this idea or fellowship those brethren who would, a major division took place in the body. Those who fellowshiped A. D. Strickler came to be known as Central. Those who refused to fellowship him came to be known as the Bereans.

1952 Berean Division

In 1938, A. D. Strickler died. In 1939, then editor of "The Christadelphian Magazine" John Carter, admitted that Strickler had been an errorist, and that the decision they had made in 1923 was wrong. He wrote:

"A criticism by bro. Strickler, of a pamphlet published by this office, led to a correspondence for about eighteen months--this led to the conclusion that he DID NOT accept without reserve, some of the clauses of "The Statement of Faith". (Chdn. 1939:84)

Here was a clear admission from the editor of Central's magazine that the Berean brethren had made the correct choice in 1923. In 1940 John Carter printed a "[10 Point Statement](#)" that had been drawn up by an American Central ecclesia as the basis for a reunion between Central and the Bereans, and which concerned the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ under the title, "A Time to Heal."

In 1944 the 10 Point Statement was circulated among Berean and Central ecclesias in the United States to receive approval. It was quickly accepted by all Berean ecclesias. Among the Central ecclesias, it was accepted by 10, rejected by 1 (Philadelphia), and two ecclesias (including A. D. Strickler's former ecclesia, Buffalo) refused to respond.

An effort was made by all to get unanimous approval to the 10 Point statement till it was clear that this would not happen. In 1947, John Carter wrote of the two Central ecclesias where the Strickler teaching was the most prevalent:

"(The Philadelphia and Buffalo, Central meetings) "attached a meaning to his [Robert Roberts] words that he did not intend..."

"The interpretation which is being imposed upon the BASF (the Christadelphian Statement of Faith) by the Philadelphia Circular is contrary to that understood by others, and contrary to all other statements on the subject in all the writings of Dr. Thomas and bro. Roberts." (Chdn. 1947, Intelligence.)

By the end of 1947, it was clear that the Central group would not unanimously accept the 10 Point Statement. Particularly, they could not accept the following, which had been taken word for word from a previous editor, Robert Roberts.

5. That it was therefore necessary that Jesus should offer for himself for the purging of his own nature, first from the uncleanness of death, that, having by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for himself, he might be able afterward to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him.

Those who had accepted the new teachings could not accept that any sacrifice was necessary for the cleansing of the physical sin. Sin, they argued, is only moral. Therefore, only the moral needs cleansed. Jesus was not morally defiled, and therefore he required no sacrifice for himself. Though Central could not agree with the original basis for Re-union, the momentum for reunion was very strong in both camps. In 1952 a large number of Bereans dropped their desire to have the 10 Point Statement affirmed, and went to Central based on a simple declaration that all Central ecclesias accepted the Statement of Faith without reservation: in a document called the [Jersey City Resolution](#).

Central/Advocate & Shield Reunion

Having unified the largest division in the Christadelphian body, John Carter turned his attention to the other two principle divisions, the Advocate and the Shield groups. In a document called the "Final

Statement", the Advocate brethren in Britain were taken into fellowship on a majority vote, acknowledging that some still believed as J. J. Andrew had believed.

In Australia, an addendum to the Statement of Faith was drawn up called the [Cooper-Carter Addendum](#). This Addendum removed the words "defiled his nature" in Clause 5, and "sin in the flesh" in Clause 12, from the Statement of Faith, making the Statement of Faith acceptable to those in the Shield group. So while in 1952, Central had agreed to the Statement of Faith enforced in fellowship, only five years later they had made two separate compromises to it.

The bringing in of these two groups caused further division to Central. Brethren who believed the truth as laid down by the pioneers of the Christadelphian movement separated from Central. Some of these joined the Bereans. Some, for reasons best explained by them, formed a new group called the Old Paths.

Legalism

In the above, I have briefly outlined the main principle upon which Christadelphians have divided over our 150 year history. There was another theme running side by side all of this, which is the principle of "legalism".

As its name implies, Legalism is the elevation of law (legalities) over all else. The principle of "legalism" is best exhibited in American Law. A law enforcement officer may witness a murder, but if he fails to follow the law when arresting the murderer, (in reading him his rights,) the murderer is set free. Law is thereby elevated over principle.

In recent years, the Central group has come to change the meaning of "legalism". In a recent article an author wrote:

"Legalism describes a fundamental approach to life and religion."

This definition is linguistically wrong. "**Fundamentalism**" describes a fundamental approach to life and religion. "**Legalism**" is a legalistic or "governed by law" approach to life and religion. It would appear that the Central group has now so far departed from the fundamental principles upon which the Christadelphian movement was born, that words need to be redefined to justify its continued course.

In 1884, a group of men began teaching that the Bible was not the wholly inspired word of God. They taught that the writers of the Bible were given the events by God, and they chose to write down what seemed best to them. This actually was a very popular doctrine in the Churches at that time as well.

When the arguments were made against it (from 2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Pet. 1:20) many men argued that it didn't matter anyway, as the Christadelphian Statement of Faith did not deal with this subject. This is "legalism" at its finest. It said that the principle was not significant, the laws (in this case the Christadelphian Statement of Faith) were all important.

"The Christadelphian Magazine" editor, Robert Roberts, wrote the preamble to the Statement of Faith, eliminating any views that the Bible is not the wholly inspired word of God. A division ensued and the new group took on the name Suffolk Street.

Writing in response to those who argued that the constitution could somehow supersede the Truth, bro. Roberts wrote:

The Christadelphian Magazine 1885, pg 309 "A society of people are bound by their laws as long as the principles that underlie these laws are upheld. An ecclesia exists first for the truth of God (which is independent of all constitutions, and cannot be made the subject of legislation, but only of formulation for concurrent agreement); secondly, for the duty arising out of the truth; and thirdly, for its corporate operations as regulated by constitution (otherwise, concurrent assent). The foundation of the whole structure is the truth; and the first part of the truth, in our day, is that the Bible is the wholly-inspired and infallible word of God. The denial, or the toleration of the denial of this, is interference with a vital condition of ecclesial life, and calls for the disregard of human constitutionalities that may stand in the way of its resistance.

When the J. J. Andrew Division referred to above came about, "Legalism" came back into play. Some men, while not agreeing with J. J. Andrew, argued that the matter should be left alone, as the subject of who comes out of the grave to judgment was not in the "Christadelphian Statement of Faith". In 1898 an Amendment was made to the "Statement of Faith" to clarify a point accepted by all Christadelphians from the beginning of the movement.

The Advocates (those leaving in the J. J. Andrew division) were immediately received by the Suffolk Street group; hence the reason of two names for the same group. Still others who divided at this time preferred to call themselves "Unamended," indicating they refused the amendment to the "Christadelphian Statement of Faith."

In 1923, A. D. Strickler followed a slightly different course toward "legalism." He interpreted the "Statement of Faith" in such a way that he could say he agreed with it, while at the same time changing its very meaning. By changing the literal meaning of clauses into symbolical meanings (much like the churches of Christendom symbolize all the Old Testament promises concerning the nation of Israel) he could say he agreed with clauses directly intended to exclude his views.

It was in this manner that he always claimed he agreed with the Statement of Faith. It was "legalism" that caused those responsible for "The Christadelphian Magazine" not to withdraw from him, even though, as editor John Carter pointed out:

"The interpretation which is being imposed upon the BASF (the Christadelphian Statement of Faith) by the Philadelphia Circular is contrary to that understood by others, and contrary to all other statements on the subject in all the writings of Dr. Thomas and bro. Roberts." (Chdn. 1947, Intelligence.)

When John Carter failed to convince these men that their interpretations were wrong, and when he discarded the 10 Point Statement as a basis for reunion, he gave "legalism" its official place in Central. The message was that if you can find some way to agree with what is written, no matter how bazaar or distorted, you will be welcomed.

Then, in 1956, when the Advocates were brought back into Central through the document called "The Final Statement" as mentioned above, the Suffolk Street group was included as well. "The Final Statement" had the exact clause, word for word, concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures that had been rejected by Robert Roberts and the pioneer brethren in 1888.

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Conclusions Concerning Central

We often hear, "That was then and this is now! Tell us why you stand aside from Central *today*." The answer is simple. We believe the words of the apostle Paul:

1CO 5:6-8 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Apart from some specific effort to purge out the leaven that was brought into Central in 1923, 1956, and 1957, why would we think that the words of the Apostle would not be true? If the Bible is true, the direction of the leavening effect will always be to become more corrupt and apostate, not less. Was it in vain that the Apostle warned:

ACT 20:28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

Observe the Christadelphian Magazine's own testimony as to the condition of things 50 years after the start of the toleration of error:

Christadelphian Magazine. 1981, October "...At least twice in the last few years (one of them within the last twelve months) private meetings have been called by individuals -- that is, attendance, which has been considerable, has been by personal invitation only. At those meetings the Christadelphian position on fellowship has been attacked and the suggestion openly made that the foundation of the community is mistaken and that fellowship with other (usually evangelical) bodies is to be advocated. The question having been explicitly raised, 'Shall we advise members to leave the Christadelphian community or to stay?' The clear

answer has been that they should stay and seek to propagate their views secretly, especially among younger members -- the older members being regarded as beyond conversion -- so subverting the community from within. There can be no doubt that this process has been going on and that the developments we have seen quite recently are some of its effects. The attitude advocated may fairly be called devious, if not downright dishonest, and does something to explain the conviction of many of our members that those who disagree with our foundations should very seriously consider their position and not continue to claim the benefits of fellowship in a community whose basic principles they can no longer endorse."

Three years later, another article appeared in the Christadelphian outlining the errors which were perplexing Central ecclesias, due to the fellowshipping of other Churches described above.

Christadelphian Magazine, 1984, October "It is doubtful whether there is a single case in which a brother or sister has begun to attend regularly another place of worship in addition to worship within the ecclesias where changes in attitude in respect of doctrine and fellowship have not taken place.

"Sooner or later these changes in attitude become changes in conviction about the rightness of or the necessity for the doctrines which Christadelphians hold. These doctrines are the very foundation stones upon which our community exists. Experience has shown that the following 'new' doctrines are accepted, tolerated or suggested in whole or in part (and there are others, too):

- "1 . The eternal Sonship of Christ, whether or not this is stated in a trinitarian form;
- "2. The personality of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the person of the Lord God and of His Son;
- "3. The substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ;
- "4. A "power of darkness", usually bordering on if not entirely accepting the orthodox doctrine of Satan and the Devil; In some cases, there is a belief in demons as the personal agents of a personal Satan;
- "5. Conscious survival of death. This is often stated in very vague terms.

"All of us will admit that these are fundamental and serious matters. It is not possible to be a Christadelphian and hold these beliefs. It is not possible to be a Christadelphian and to doubt the corresponding Christadelphian doctrines to those listed above. Furthermore, it is not possible to be a true evangelical and not believe in (at least) doctrines 1 and 3 above."

What the above writers do not understand is that the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ is the hub of the wheel, from which all other doctrines proceed like spokes. When it was compromised in 1923, 1956, and 1957, the leavening began and will continue. Corruption on all other points of Scriptural truth was both unavoidable and inevitable. It is simply not possible that the Word of God can be wrong. Paul prophesied it. That settles it.

The concept that we must stay and fight the corruption sounds noble to the flesh, but at its root, it means that the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul gave poor advice. Paul wrote:

2CO 6:17-18 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Currently, on the web, there is a commentary by a Central brother on a Central Christadelphian publication called "The Endeavour Magazine." The article is entitled "[Endeavour--Seeking to Undermine Bible Truth](#)". This article clearly details direct attacks on the truth made in the magazine in the year 2000. The brother begins criticizing "The Endeavour" for advocating fellowship with other denominations. He follows this up with a criticism of an "Endeavour" article which argues against the Christadelphian belief that Christ's Kingdom will be the Kingdom of Israel restored. Next the brother argues against an Endeavour article which advocates women speaking (a now long practiced tradition of those responsible for this magazine).

Leaving "The Endeavor Magazine" this Central brother goes on to criticize attacks made against the BASF in popular (albeit heretical) Central publication called "Saved by His Life" by John Martin. In an article entitled [The BASF--It's Importance and Teaching](#) he quotes from an editorial in a 1993 Christadelphian where it was written: "But as he bore no moral accountability for his mortality, he did not have to make an offering for the nature he received at birth (Editorial, The Christadelphian, December 1993)." We agree with most of what is written in the article by this Central brother. The only disagreement we have is with the brother's contention that this concept, which he calls the saved by his life theory after John Martin's book, originated in that book in these last days. In fact, John Martin's book is just evidence of a leavening which has been taking place in Central since 1923. The leaven has now so permeated the loaf that what once was spoken only in the shadows is now proclaimed from the platform.

The teachings of John Martin have so corrupted the Central body that the last vestige of solid truth in Central, those represented by the Logos magazine, now have come face to face with the corrupting influences of the past. Writing in 2004 about the effects of past compromises, a trio of Central brethren wrote a response to a man who has departed from true Christadelphian teachings, and who was rewriting history and criticizing as errorists, those who had separated from Central over the compromises of 1956 and 1957 which I have already described. They wrote:

A Grave Concern: Truth under Threat by Philip Taylor, Graeham Mansfield (Editor of the Logos Magazine,) and Keith Cook "The letter also reveals ignorance concerning the history of reunion and the reason for the formation of the Old Paths Fellowship. That fellowship was not formed by those in Australia who retained what Brighton describes as "those unscriptural views." It was first formed in the UK by those who rejected reunion there in February 1957 and who objected to the fellowship of the Suffolk Street fellowship, [which was based on a document called the "Final Statement"--JP] claiming that it permitted doctrinal error. The doctrine of the Atonement was not mentioned in that Reunion Statement, and in fact there

was agreement on the doctrinal issues covered by the statement. The problem arose over its implementation. Reunion took place between ecclesias who accepted the statement on a majority vote which left a possibility of a minority in ecclesias who were accepted into fellowship even though they may not have been in agreement with those doctrines, and who in fact did not accept the BASF without reservation. There was no action proposed with regard to such individuals, but those who formed the Old Paths believed that they should be withdrawn from. The original separation of the Old Paths from Central was with regard to the doctrine of fellowship, as it remains to this day.

When reunion took place in Australia the following year, again it was on the basis of a majority vote within ecclesias, which again left the possibility of a minority which did not accept the Basis of Fellowship. Those who later joined the Old Paths Fellowship in Australia considered the Cooper-Carter Addendum to be a clumsy statement, and not clearly defining the BASF. They had always been part of the Temperance Hall (Central) fellowship, and saw the CCA to be inadequate, and unnecessary. Regrettably, subsequent events would appear to show that such fears were justified.

The fears of those brethren forming the Old Paths, and those brethren who at that time joined the Bereans were justified. It could be no other way, if the Bible is true. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." The leavening was inevitable, and Scripturally prophesied. It is for all these reasons that I am a Berean Christadelphian, and that I recommend this to all others.

Section 3: From the Formation of the Bereans to the Restatement (1923 - 1960)

After the formation of the Berean Fellowship in 1923, the constant push to corrupt our foundation principles left the Berean body. We really haven't been troubled in any significant way by ones corrupting divine principals. What few problems have come up in those areas, have all been resolved by the local ecclesia involved. Usually, those who wish to corrupt the foundation principles leave us for Central long before the proper fellowship procedures (described in Matt. 18) run their course.

However, an equally dangerous tendency took its place regarding walk and conduct issues. Certain men decided they needed to push their particular views, especially relating to divorce and remarriage, on to the brotherhood as a whole, and demanded agreement upon points of view which differed from those of our pioneer brethren.

From the foundation of the Christadelphian movement, ecclesias were free to order themselves on walk and conduct matters without interference from others. There was no clergy to which to appeal, and no central office that would make decisions. Providing the divine principles were acknowledged and believed, how ecclesias resolved their difficult and sad cases were left to the individual ecclesia. A wide variety of views pertaining to divorce and remarriage were accepted, and it was thought best to allow every ecclesia to handle its own difficulties the best it could.

Generally speaking, all Christadelphians believed that divorce is wrong, but most also believed that Jesus permitted divorce and remarriage for fornication. (Matt. 5:37; 19:9). Commenting on this, G. V. Growcott, editor of the Berean for a number of years, wrote:

"TO SUMMARIZE: The teachings of bre. Thomas, Roberts, Jannaway, and the whole brotherhood up till at least the 1920's is clearly established: Mt. 5:32 & 19:9 are part of Christ's law, and permit divorce and remarriage in case of adultery." (Divorce Circular, 1971)

Other Christadelphians, notably John Thomas, also believed that Paul also permitted divorce and remarriage if an unbelieving spouse departed from the marriage.

In the 1920's, a move away from the clear teachings of Matt. 5:37 and 19:9 occurred in the Christadelphian movement generally, and the Berean Fellowship was not immune. It was not easy to do this among the Berean Brotherhood. We do not regard the writings of bre. Thomas and Roberts as inspired, but we do regard them as wonderful Bible students with excellent judgment and understanding. To challenge their understanding on a matter of fellowship would have been very difficult. Recognizing this, some men began arguing that by "divorce," all the pioneer brethren meant was "separation," and not what they began to call "legal divorce". These argued that Matt. 5:37 and 19:9 permitted couples to separate for fornication, but not to "legally divorce" or remarry.

"Legal divorce" was a term used by the pioneers to distinguish the difference between what was legal, and what was Scriptural. The law agencies where the brethren lived could legally grant divorce for a cause other than what was Scriptural (such as cruelty or desertion). This was a legal divorce, in

that the law agencies recognized it, but not a Scriptural one. Further, some Scriptural divorce was not legal. These problems can be seen in the writing of John Thomas:

"The world of outer darkness is a law to itself, and orders it to suit its own notions of right. The Law of Moses allowed a plurality of wives, and divorce, and punished the 'social evil' with death. Jesus, who was 'made under the law,' did not interfere with the law, but forbade divorce upon any other ground than the wife's unfaithfulness. The apostle, whose authority he declared equal to his own in teaching the things of the Deity, allowed divorce on another ground, and for the sake of peace to the Christian party. But to carry out this gospel liberty would place a man or woman as a criminal at the bar of Gentile justice and law. Therefore, Peter has said: 'submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake' provided, of course, that in so doing, his precepts were not transgressed; this apostolic tradition applies also to their ordinances of marriage. They [the world] forbid two contemporary wives, allow divorce on unscriptural grounds, and tolerate the 'social evil' to any extent without punishment. Hence a saint, regulated by the word, would have only one wife at a time; he would seek divorce only on scriptural grounds, and avoid the 'social evil' as the plague."
(Ambassador, 1866, pg. 94)

According to John Thomas, Paul allowed divorce "for the sake of peace to the Christian party." Paul said, "if the unbelieving depart, let him depart." But the nations at that time would not recognize divorce for the reason of religious differences. To presume yourself divorced and marry again based only on Paul's permission, and apart from a legal divorce would make one legally a polygamist, and a criminal at the bar of Gentile justice.

During the 1920s, to try to make the pioneer brethren say something they never said the term "legal divorce" was given a new meaning. Its original meaning is clear enough. A legal divorce is one not illegal in the land where a saint is living. G. V. Growcott used this definition in his writings while discussing the writings of the pioneer brethren:

"...Bro. Roberts says the same as bro. Thomas: there must be a legal divorce (a divorce not contravening man's laws) before there can be remarriage."

"Bro. Thomas just says there cannot be marriage without 'legal divorce'--a divorce not illegal according to man's laws. He had to say that or some would have taken him to imply that the laws of Christ were all we had to consider, and we could flout the laws of man in this matter..."

But by using the term as G. V. Growcott used the term, it would never be possible to revise the writings of the pioneers brethren. Therefore, new definitions were brought to the fore. "Scriptural divorce" was said to mean separation, while "legal divorce" was said to be obtaining **any** divorce through Gentile law, which would allow for remarriage.

To defend this new view (new to the 1920's) that divorce is *not* the subject of Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9, merely separation; there needed to be some way to avoid the force of the exception clause

given in those verses. A reason had to be developed to justify saying that "put away" and "divorce" do not really mean "divorce." To do that the following argument was introduced.

This new belief stated that Christ taught:

MAT 19:6 "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

They reasoned that Jesus would not have stated the divine Edenic Law of marriage, only to have "contradicted" it three verses later in allowing a putting away of a spouse for fornication. Therefore, they reasoned, if you merely separated from an adulterous spouse, you would not be "putting asunder" the marriage bond.

It was pointed out to these men that an exception is not a contradiction. The exception proves the rule, not contradicts it. Further, it was pointed out that we have no authority to determine that Jesus could not make an exception to the Edenic Law. It is clearly written that he did. We only have the authority to accept what is plainly written, as the pioneer brethren did.

As to the issue itself, why couldn't there be an exception to the Edenic Law in the law of Christ? Certainly God, through Moses, made many exceptions to the Edenic Law when giving the Law of Moses. Finally, it was pointed out that Jesus made other exceptions to what he spoke. He spoke concerning his generation: "...there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas". No one argues that "the sign of the prophet Jonas" contradicts his statement that "no sign shall be given to it."

But to those in the 1920's who had become obsessed with the divorce/remarriage issue, this fell on deaf ears. New and different ways to interpret Matt. 19:9 were brought forward: all of them unknown to the pioneer brethren.

Family Journal

In opposition to the new idea of the 1920's, there arose a class of men who knew this new idea was wrong. They knew that Jesus had permitted divorce and remarriage, and they began to argue in defense of what Jesus had spoken. But, like so many on this issue, they too became obsessed with the matter, and soon were drawn into a false position in relation to it.

It was pointed out to these men that the whole argument was immaterial, for the laws of the land where Christadelphians lived at that time (1920s) required a law suit against their spouse, and regardless of the divorce issue, this was not permitted. Paul's teaching is quite clear that we may not go to law against another for any cause **whatsoever**. To secure a divorce for adultery in the 1920s, required going to law against the spouse in charging and proving a spouse to be guilty of adultery. Further, the matter was left up to the discretion of a judge. Christadelphians cannot submit their disputes to a worldly judge for arbitration. John Thomas had written from the earliest days:

Elpis Israel, pp. 244-245 "Do ye not know that the Saints should judge the world?" The verb here rendered "judge" is the same as is translated 'go to law' in the preceding verse. The

apostle, therefore, asks if they do not know that they will sit judicially, and dispense justice to the world, according to the divine law; and because this is their destiny he positively forbids believers in the covenants of promise to submit themselves to the judgment of the unjust. It is better, says he, for one to be defrauded than to submit to such a humiliation. Let the heirs of the world arbitrate their own affairs in the present state: for it is a strange thing if men whose destiny is to judge the world and angels, cannot settle things pertaining to this life."

So our established position was that we could not bring charges against another at the court of the world, nor could we submit a matter to them for their decision.

Nevertheless, some men, in their zeal to maintain the clear permission Christ granted in Matt. 5:37 and Matt 19:9 against the new ideas restricting divorce to only mean separation, ignored the Apostle Paul's restriction. They said that Jesus would not have granted us the permission to divorce for adultery on one hand, and then have the Apostle Paul take it away with his commands concerning not going to law, on the other.

I don't believe that this argument can appeal to anyone not already obsessed with the overall Divorce/Remarriage issue. Paul didn't take away the ability to divorce for adultery. The Roman Catholic Church did, when she made marriage a "Holy Sacrament" and forbade divorce. Ultimately, she succeeded in having her laws incorporated into the national laws of the nations, and the brethren suffered the consequences of this, no less than they have suffered in other, more severe ways during the two thousand years history of the Catholic Church.

A little reflection on the matter proves this. When the brethren lived under Catholic domination, divorce was unthinkable because it was illegal according to the laws of the land. Such is still the case in modern Catholic states such as Ireland. Would those men who counsel breaking the divine law in going to law against another (bring charges of adultery into court) to exercise Christ's permission, counsel committing polygamy to exercise Christ's permission if brethren lived during the Catholic dominated ages? Certainly not! Again to the point, in the very early 1800's it was not possible to obtain a divorce in England, unless you were a member of the Church of England. Would these brethren also counsel joining the Church of England to take advantage of Christ's permission? Why then would anyone justify making charges and submitting to the judgment of worldly judges to take advantage of Christ's permission, now? It doesn't make sense now, and it didn't then.

Those men who maintained that a brother or sister could be correct in bringing charges and submitting to the judgment of a Gentile court found it necessary to separate and formed a group called "Family Journal."

The Dawn Division

With the most ardent, if misled, defenders of Jesus' precepts pertaining to marriage and divorce out of the way, this set the stage for those who had been agitating that there is no exception to the Edenic law to begin to force that position. In the very late 20s, an ecclesia in California experienced a situation where a brother whose wife had committed adultery and left him, remarried, and applied

for membership. The ecclesia ultimately voted not to receive him back into fellowship. Some members of that ecclesia voted that they should, and other ecclesias had voiced concerns that the ecclesia had made a poor decision, but as from our foundation we allowed ecclesias to govern themselves on this matter, the ecclesias were satisfied not to intervene in another ecclesia's affairs.

But the criticism ruffled those pushing the new concept that the exception clause does not allow for "legal divorce." Following the events of the late '20s, those brethren who insisted there could be no "legal divorce," and no remarriage after divorce, began to insist that their belief be accepted by all in the Berean fellowship. In the early 1940s, they constructed a four-point statement to which they demanded all agree. This stated there could be no remarriage after divorce while the spouse was still alive, regardless of the circumstances. This statement was a contradiction to Matt. 5:37, 19:9, and to the writings of the pioneer Christadelphians. It was rejected by the Bereans, and there was a division. The new body was called the "Dawn Fellowship."

Throughout the 1940s there was a very strong "back to Central movement" as [discussed previously](#), culminating in the division of 1952.

Old Paths

Following this, the Berean Fellowship attempted to be ready to receive those who were leaving Central due to their dissatisfaction with the unions of the Suffolk Street/Advocates (in 1956), and the Shield group (in 1957). To guard against the errors of the Central group, the Berean body formed a [Berean Restatement](#), which stated the way all Berean Ecclesias understood the "Christadelphian Statement of Faith" relevant to areas of disagreement between themselves and the Central body that these men were now leaving.

Fairly soon into the process, however, it appeared that those coming out of Central desired to go their own way. They formed the Old Paths group. This left the Bereans predominantly in the USA and Canada, while the Old Paths occupied a similar position in Britain and Australia. If there were differences between the Old Paths and the Bereans at that time, it would have been in the arena of divorce and remarriage. Both groups have suffered division on this issue since that time, and the exact differences are difficult to say.

Section 4: Our last 30 Years

The Four Points

An Exception is not a Contradiction

In 1972, the Bereans were again agitated by those insisting upon a particular view of divorce and remarriage. This division, like the Dawn before them, had its roots in the idea that Jesus would not have stated the Edenic Law in verse 6, and then contradicted it in verse 9. A typical exchange would be as follows:

(From a supporter of the 1972 divorce movement) "I believe we will all agree that there cannot be and must not be any contradictions in God's Word. Christ would not say in two places to his disciples that one cannot divorce and remarry, then in another place contradict what Christ said..."

(G.V. Growcott, editor of the Berean, in direct answer to the above) "No contradiction in God's word. Absolutely right! But we must be careful not to infer and create contradiction when there is none, just to support a theory. I am tremendously saddened at attempts to see 'contradiction' both in Jesus' clear and consistent teachings, and also in the writings of our pioneer brethren on those teachings.

"An exception is not a contradiction. It is axiomatic that 'the exception proves the rule.' An exception confirms and establishes a rule, showing the rule is not just indefinite and general, but universal outside the stated exception. Many rules are general and exceptions are understood to be possible, but if we say 'This is the only exception', we confirm the rule's universality in every other case. This is surely an obvious and elementary fact of language and reason, and to try to stigmatize a clearly expressed exception as a contradiction is to make language and reasoning meaningless.

"It is recorded in Mark 8:12 that Jesus said (to the Pharisees-note) 'There shall no sign be given unto this generation'; PERIOD ; no exception.

"In Matt. 16:4, the same incident is recorded 'There shall no sign be given unto it, BUT the sign of the prophet Jonas.'

"It is not essential that we prove this is the same incident. The illustration is just as clear otherwise, but actually this can be demonstrated to be the same incident beyond any reasonable doubt. Why did Mark omit the exception that Matthew recorded in the same incident?

"Are we to throw out this beautiful exception the sign of the prophet Jonas just because Mark does not mention it? Are we to demand that Mark have it in before we will believe? Are we to charge 'contradiction' as the world is so quick to do in any seeming discrepancy? Note again,

Matt. gives the exception; Mark recording the same incident does not. Is it conceivably possible that the supporters of this article have any difficulty with this contradiction?"

These brethren ultimately issued a Four-Point Statement that forbids remarriage while the first spouse was still alive. It was a little more extreme than the Dawn position in the details, but essentially the same thing. Its roots were the same. It argues that Christ would not have restated the Divine Edenic Law, only to have contradicted it three verses later. (This erroneous statement appears to be the common thread of all those who attack the foundation Christadelphian position, regardless of how the details play out later.)

The difference between the Dawn and the new group which chose no name, but which has been referred to as "Four Points" by others, is simply this: the Dawn believe that if a person comes to the knowledge of the truth divorced but not remarried, they are free to remarry. The Four Point believes that such a person would not be free to remarry.

Another Berean Fellowship

Finally, in 1997, these old issues combined with the changes in the worlds divorce laws to again divide the body. The change from the divorce laws which required making and proving charges in open court, and the submitting of evidence to a Gentile judge for a decision had ended in some nations, and had been greatly modified in others. The old Catholic inspired laws called, "For Fault" law, had been replaced with various forms of "No fault" law, or the even less litigious "Dissolution" law.

The change had been coming for over thirty years. In 1972, then Berean editor, G. V. Growcott, had been asked directly about this.

Question 3: "Can a divorce be obtained in this (Canada) or your country (US) without going to law?"

Answer: This question clearly means going to law against, not just "going to law" as when getting married. With this clear, the answer is Yes, as concerns many states of the US (including, I now believe, Michigan). Increasingly so. More and more states are adopting "no fault" divorce laws in which (as I understand it) there is no accusation, no charging with sin, no suing at law, no going to law against; any more than there is in getting married in the first place.

I do not have any specific information, but this appears to be a very rapidly developing trend. And in the light of this, it should be noted (as having a large bearing on this whole question), that what in the world is called "marriage" today is merely legalized, temporary, terminable fornication. If a couple, when "married," do not regard it as for life, but merely for mutual convenience to be terminated at will, then it is fornication, whatever the world may call it. They are never, in any true sense, married at all.

Divorce in the US appears to be quite quickly moving in the direction of the conditions it was in Christ's day under Roman law a purely personal affair no more regulated than marriage was regulated. Truly there are certain regulations, and forms to be gone through, just as there are with marriage. For instance, with marriage, the authorities have rules as to residency, medical examination, age, consanguinity, etc. Conforming with all this is "going to law," but it is not "going to law against." Such seems to increasingly be the case with divorce.

Actually, governmental prohibition and regulation of divorce is a hangover from Papal Catholic rule of the "Christian" world. In one way it has been a very helpful shield for us against the problem, but in another way it has greatly complicated and obscured it, and prevented us from facing the real issues of the matter. When the trend (to looser legal divorce) started, I greatly feared it, feeling it would strip away our outer line of defense against the divorce evil, but more and more I feel it is the hand of God making us face the deeper issues involved, which is much healthier and safer.

The change in national laws brought out questions concerning which of the new laws were truly "going to law against another" which is forbidden by Paul, and which laws were "going to law, but not "going to law against another." Most were satisfied to leave this question up to the local ecclesia involved. Some were not.

A small group of brethren decided that all others must agree with them that a specific Texas No Fault law was, in every instance, going to law against another because of the legal language involved. Others pointed out to them that while they agreed that the legal language was aggressive, still, there were no charges of sin, no presentation of evidence, and no decision to be made by a judge (beyond verifying that the paperwork was correctly filled out). These felt it was dangerous to take such a technical approach to the matter, to call this "going to law against another." But, for the sake of peace, the latter agreed to submit to the sensitivities of the former so unity could continue.

This was not satisfactory to those wanting complete agreement that this matter was definitely "going to law against another." This argument, which began about which law is or isn't "going to law against another," soon aroused those who still held aspects of the Dawn/Four Point position on the subject.

To those who held the old arguments pertaining to "legal divorce," the type of law didn't matter. Rather than accept the simple clear meaning that "legal divorce is a divorce not illegal in the land," the arguments of the Dawn division were brought back that "legal divorce" is "*any mans-law-related divorce.*" It was argued that if everywhere the pioneer brethren wrote "divorce," you understand that as "separation" and never "legal divorce," then their ideas could be supported by the pioneer brethren. This is probably true. And if everywhere that the pioneer brethren wrote "defiled" and "sin in the flesh" we understand this as a symbol, instead of a physical principle, A. D. Strickler's views would harmonize with the pioneers.

But these men had defined these terms. There is no reason that we should give their words a meaning they never did. It would only make sense to use their own definitions to define their words.

As G. V. Growcott wrote, "Legal Divorce" is one that does not contravene the laws of the land. Never had the pioneer brethren wrote that divorce only means "separation." .

Nevertheless, these men forced their definition that all of man's-law-related divorce was going to law against another. They argued that *any* divorce which goes through the law is forbidden, and they demanded agreement by all others on this point. This set the stage for a further division.

Further, the old argument that Jesus would not give the "Edenic Law" in verse 6, and contradict it in verse 9 of Matt. 19 was brought back. They changed the words from "contradict to "reverse himself", but the argument was the same. ([See Above discussion.](#)) One circular of the times against the established Berean position stated:

"...Jesus said, '...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder' (Matt 19:4-6). Having put forth this argument, Jesus is not going to *reverse himself* just 3 verses later, when he says, '...whosoever shall put away his wife, except if be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery..' (Matt. 19:9)"

These two arguments from the past combined in such a way to say that if anyone believed that Matt. 5:37 & 19:9 permitted ones to initiate a legal divorce for adultery, ***even if there is no "going to law against another"***, that such an one is not fit for fellowship.

This position that ones may never initiate a legal divorce struck full force against the established Christadelphian position. An example of this had clearly been given by then Berean Magazine editor, G. V. Growcott. He wrote:

"2. But I do not believe in divorce. I believe it is an 'evil,' as the Restatement says. I believe cutting off your arm is an evil. It can never be anything else but evil. Every effort should be made to heal it. **But if it is hopelessly corrupt, and corrupting the rest of the body, there may be no other alternative.**

"It is only in this light that I can see the possibility of anyone using the Ex Cl (provided no laws of God are broken -- as Suing at Law).

"If someone said to me: 'My partner is utterly corrupt in whoredom, and determined to continue in it. **I must put her (or him) away, and I am so constituted as to come under the description of Paul in 1 Cor 7:5,9, etc. I must choose either corruption or remarriage.**' If they said this, I would find it difficult to condemn them.

"My own private thought would be that if they sought strength from God in constant prayer, they would be given the ability to endure any condition they found themselves in. This would be my private inner view, but in the light of what Paul says, and not being able to judge how others are constituted, **I could not force this view upon them as a matter of First Principle,**

and therefore of fellowship. I would leave the judgment to God. God has made a provision. I believe (with Paul) that they would be 'happier' if they did not feel they had to use it, but it is very easy to get 'holier' than God in our regulations upon our fellow servants.

And if they added the fact that they had several young children that needed a mother (or a father), I would not see in this of itself any proof of their right to remarry, but I would be impressed by the fact that what bre. Thomas and Roberts understood to be God's way and provision in such a case would have the merit of bringing possible good out of evil, and creating a normal family relationship with hope for the future. Compare this with the dangerous, unnatural condition the new theories create."

So here was the clear and consistent Christadelphian teaching on the matter. If someone said they must **put their spouse away** and remarry, providing they did not go to law against them as forbidden by the apostle Paul, that this should not be forced as a First Principle or a **matter of fellowship**. In spite of this clear example, those agitating that there can be no "legal divorce" ran roughshod over these principles and demanded agreement.

As the debate moved forward, the original cause of the unrest fell further into the background. When the final document was prepared defining the division, it was clear that division was over the initiation of any divorce, not just what laws can or cannot be used. In the letter declaring the division those withdrawing wrote (and remember, they continue to call themselves Berean):

"Berean Christadelphians do not believe that they may initiate 'legal divorce' of any description, regardless of the country in which they live, or in whatever way 'legal divorces' are stated. 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery' (Matt. 5:32).

"If there is adultery, and if there is man's-law-related divorce (legal divorce), then there may be remarriage by the injured partner, without any sin or stigma..."

The above statement would seem to have excluded those who originally began the debate on the matter. They originally appeared to be concerned with which law could or could not be used, but this states that no man's-law-related-law could be used. In any case, they agreed to the above, and the division went forward.

As the established Berean position was that each ecclesia should work out its own sad problems within the framework of the teachings of Christ and the apostles, these new demands were not readily accepted by the body, and a division took place. This new group, a minority of brethren, have taken the unusual step of leaving the body but not dropping the name. They allow themselves to continue to be identified with us as Bereans. While this is most unusual, there is nothing that can be done about it.

When the Bereans were formed in 1923, the Berean brotherhood was quite anxious to disassociate itself from the Central group and the errors of A. D. Strickler. Apparently, the new group does not feel

the same need to disassociate themselves from those it feels are in error, as did the faithful brethren of old.

From the standpoint of the divorce issue itself, the Bereans have no problem in identifying with the new group, as we take no fellowship stand on these things, one way or the other. We allow each ecclesia to resolve its own sad problems. The Bereans do have a problem with their behavior pertaining to the doctrine of fellowship. If they wish to continue to be "Bereans", they should then fellowship "Bereans" and not refuse the fellowship of those with whom they share a name. If they do not wish to associate with us, they should choose a new name and move on.

In any case, while it is embarrassing, it is not within our power to do anything about it. As bro. John Thomas said, "What cannot be cured must be endured."

There have been other men with other issues who walked with us for a time, but who came to believe they had some new point of truth and insisted on all others excepting their position, and moving away from the guidance and council of the Christadelphian movement. These too have separated from us, but never created the divisions that the divorce question has. You can even find one such article on the Web entitled "[A matter of Fellowship.](#)" All of the reasons given by this brother (whom I personally have a great deal of admiration for) are reasons upon which we have never legislated in the past, and refused to legislate now. One article on his site even has a direct attack on the fellowship position of an early editor, Robert Roberts, pertaining to [head coverings.](#)

Those who wish to add to our original foundation, and those who wish to take from our original foundation will not find the Bereans a satisfactory movement. We believe we are too close to the return of Christ to go changing our movement at this late date. The foundations laid 150 years ago have served us well to this point, and I doubt any see any need to change now.

* * * * *

Conclusions Concerning Bereans

As has been demonstrated in this history, the path chosen by the Berean Christadelphians has not been smooth. The words of the Scriptures have rung so very true:

LUK 12:51-53 "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

It has been through much effort and many tears that the original position of those who rediscovered the Truth from the superstitions of Christendom has been maintained. Some have wished to take away from it. Some have tried to add to it. To the best of our ability, we have tried to maintain the narrow and confined path that leads to life.

We know that our detractors say we "follow men, not God." To those we simply say that we maintain the original foundation, not because it is the original, but because we believe that the position these men took was the proper position in relation to divine things. We don't follow men, but we do respect men for their work's sake in uncovering the truth from the darkness that is in the world. After nearly 150 years of sincere brethren examining the foundation that was laid down by John Thomas, we can say with Robert Roberts:

Christadelphian 1898, p. 128. "To the charge of holding 'that the knowledge of Scripture, in the writings of Dr. Thomas, have reached a finality,' we plead guilty...Our judgment is distinctly to the effect imputed-- that in the writings of Dr. Thomas the Truth is developed as a finality, and that they are a depot of the Christian doctrine. In this sense we are 'committed to Dr. Thomas.' God used him in the doing of His work. In His sight, and with His help, we shall hold fast to the Truth brought to light by his means."

We encourage all who are like minded to come and walk with us.