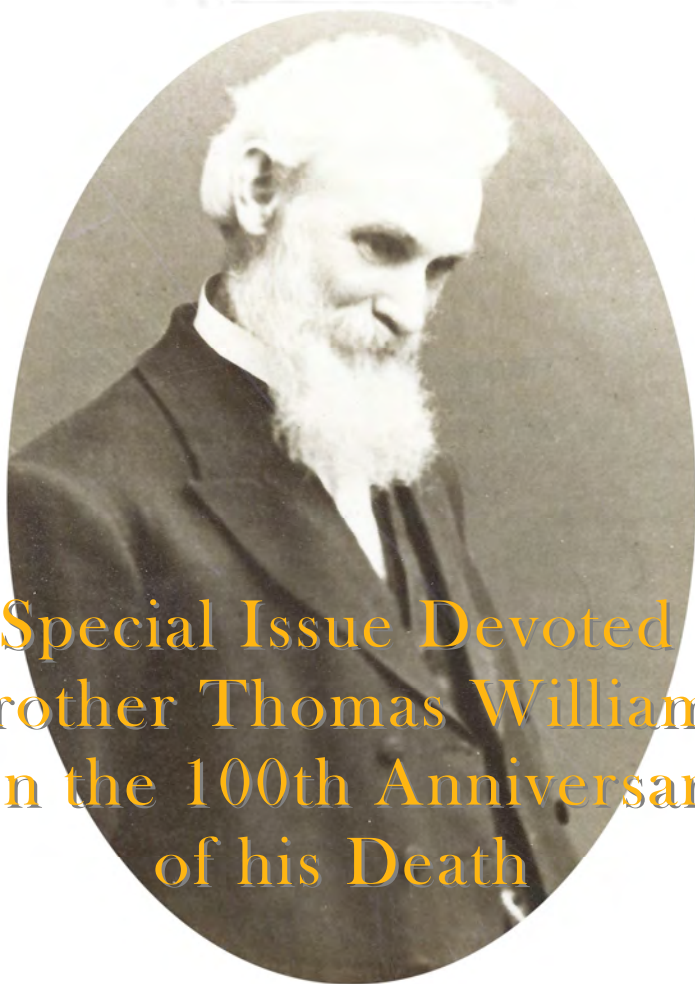


# The **Christadelphian** Advocate



**A Special Issue Devoted to  
Brother Thomas Williams  
On the 100th Anniversary  
of his Death**

**DECEMBER 2013**

*A monthly magazine in defense of the "Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ" as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to "Taking Out A People For Yahweh's Name"*

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Function	Personnel	Address	Email & Telephone
<b>Subscriptions and changes of address should be sent to the Treasurer.</b>			
<b>SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>	Tom Carson Treasurer	8100 Three Chopt Road Suite 238, Richmond, VA 23229-4833	tcarsoncpa@earthlink.net (804) 673-7400
<b>Material for publication, including ecclesial news, should be sent to the Editor.</b>			
EDITOR	Jim Washeck*	12 Westwood Estates Drive St. Peters, MO 63376-1349	washecks@juno.com
Prophecy	James Farrar*	28 Baker Road North Grimsby, ON L3M 2X1	james.farrar@ christadelphian-advocate.org
Education / Outreach / Projects	Josh Vest*	55 Parkway Road Bronxville, NY 10708-3601	joshvest@hotmail.com
Questions & Answers	Ken Wood*	1210 Sunset Lake Road Brattleboro, VT 05301-9772	brokenwood@juno.com
<b>BOOKSTORE</b>	Casey King	P. O. Box 11701 Richmond, VA 23230-0101	books@ christadelphian-advocate.org
<b>WEBSITE</b>	www.christadelphian-advocate.org		

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# The Christadelphian Advocate

*He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.*

Jeremiah 23:28

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## Introduction

### The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Brother Thomas Williams



The January 1914 *Advocate* opened with the title **Sudden Death of the Editor of the Advocate** and with the words, “It is with profound regret that we have to record the death, with tragic suddenness, of Brother Thomas Williams, the editor of the Christadelphian Advocate, which occurred on Monday, 8th December, 1913, at about 5 p.m.”

Brother Williams had sailed for England on August 2, 1913; his fourth trip to visit, lecture, and encourage English brethren.

The vertigo that had afflicted him before departing on this trip remained with him, and near the end he complained of rheumatism which was proving to be a difficulty in the completion of his lecturing appointments. Returning to Mumbles in anticipation of rest and recuperation, he had literally to be carried from the train to the waiting cab. He fell asleep a few days later; the January 1914 *Advocate* recording the following response:

“At first the staggering fact was scarcely realizable. No one imagined that his indisposition was other than temporary, and all hoped that with the careful nursing so freely and willingly bestowed he would presently recover and be amongst us again. This, however, was not to be, and as time passed the awful fact pressed itself home that in very truth he was dead ... Brother John Owler officiated at the short service, among other things saying, ‘We should all have said had we been consulted, that he could ill be spared, that we wanted him some time longer to fight the good fight, to lead the van, in guiding the good ship of Truth through the shoals, which, as in time past, it may have to encounter again. But that is not God’s way, and in our powerlessness, we must needs bow our heads in submission.’”

Brother Williams died at age 66, having dedicated his life and effort to the promotion of the Truth through his prolific pen, the eloquence of his voice, and the reasoning and logic he employed in preaching the Gospel. His written works remain with us today as a standard of doctrinal exposition and belief; found in some quantity in Unamended libraries.

Brother Williams maintained a reputation both free of blemish and noted for his unwavering promotion of fundamental doctrinal beliefs. We find that reputation referenced in the condolences the Williams family received immediately following his death (the news of which had been cabled from England apprising members of the household of faith throughout the United States and Canada). As was reported:

“Then came a veritable flood of condolence and sympathy from all quarters, showing the intensity of the love and affection which our brother and sister have engendered wherever they have been. Hundreds of telegrams and letters have been sent to Sister Williams and Brother John Knight Clement.”

We here produce a portion of the condolence to Sister Williams from the Washington D.C. ecclesia as a representative example of “the veritable flood of condolence and sympathy” the family received:

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The sad news has just come to us of the death of our highly esteemed and beloved brother. Yes, we loved him – we love you both, for we could scarce think of one without the other. We esteemed him for his work’s sake. We loved him because he was clean, honest and true, with no mark of deception about him. We feel there is no one that can take his place in the hearts of the true brethren of Christ. No more difficulties can he adjust. He is gone! But his works do follow him, and some of his last words were an exhortation to true resignation to the will of the Father. He worked to the last in the Master’s vineyard, and was true to the faith once delivered to the saints, and we feel sure there is a crown of righteousness laid up for him...

This special issue is not offered in veneration of Brother Thomas Williams, but in recognition and regard to his enduring contribution to our community’s understanding and appreciation of the Truth, which he upheld throughout the dark days of change and controversy. We believe brethren familiar with his activities and writings in *The Advocate* esteem Brother Williams’ contributions today just as did those brethren writing their condolences in December 1913. May this special issue stir reflection and renew appreciation for the example set by this exemplary servant of the LORD.

## **Brother Thomas Williams: A Brief Biography**

Thomas Williams was born April 7, 1847 near Swansea in South Wales, Great Britain. He was raised by his grandmother due to the untimely death of his mother when he was only two years old. Thomas learned to be a carpenter as a young lad in his hometown of Parkmill. After his apprenticeship, he found work with a fellow carpenter, William Clement, in nearby Mumbles (a small fishing village eight miles to the west at the end of Swansea Bay). It was William Clement who introduced young Thomas to the Truth and later became his father-in-law. Brother Clement was an acquaintance of Dr. John Thomas and a faithful member of the ecclesia in Mumbles. **Thomas Williams became a faithful student himself, embracing the Truth at the age of seventeen.** It is reported that he was immersed in Mumbles on Sunday, January 15, 1868. He soon after married William Clement's daughter Elizabeth, and their young family quickly grew with the birth of their first three of eight children.

**The attraction of the New World could not be resisted by Thomas and Elizabeth, and so, it was in 1872 that the family of five sailed for America.** They first went to Chicago but soon thereafter settled in the small town of Riverside, Iowa where they joined the local "ecclesia" of twelve members. While in Riverside, Brother Williams worked in the lumber and construction business and the family soon established a small farm on their property. The Williams family continued to grow after moving to this side of the Atlantic, with the household eventually totaling ten: Gershom, Fred, May, George and Bessie joined their older siblings born in Wales: Clement, William, and Catherine. It is told that their firstborn in America was named Gershom because they felt as "strangers in a strange land" (see Exodus 2:22). As with many large families, some of their children accepted the Truth while others did not.

It is not known exactly when the Williams family relocated from Riverside to Waterloo, Iowa. It is known that they were residing there when **Brother Williams began publishing *The Christadelphian Advocate* in March, 1885.** Arrangements were made at that point for him to devote himself to the proclamation of the Truth through the written and spoken word, and he soon found himself in great demand as a lecturer and debater throughout the United States and Canada. Extensive travel then became a routine part of Brother Williams' life. His travels, as with the other pioneers of the Truth, had a dual purpose: encouraging those within the Household, and spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ to those who had willing ears to hear.

**During his travels, Brother Williams had to deal with many problems and controversies that arose within the larger community of**

**Christadelphians as well as within individual ecclesias.** Among the false teachings that he actively opposed were “Renunciationism,” “Partial Inspiration,” the “free life” heresy (which developed into “clean flesh” teaching), and “immortal emergence.” There was one occasion that occurred in Kansas City during his busy travel schedule of 1887 that is noteworthy. It involved a brother who was of the opinion that we have no right to dictate who may partake of the emblems at the Lord’s Table and who may not. Brother Williams emphatically denounced this position, setting forth the Scripture’s teaching in regard to fellowship practice.

**In 1888, he met Brother Robert Roberts in Wauconda, Illinois and again in Lanesville, Virginia for the first time since leaving Wales.** Questions had earlier arisen in the minds of some brethren as to which of the Truth’s publications one should subscribe, *The Advocate* or *The Christadelphian* – of which Brother Roberts was editor. Brother Williams refused to be drawn into the discussion, expressing that it should be up to each individual to decide for him or herself; and Brother Roberts also came to terms with initial reservations that he had toward Brother Williams after their meeting at the two gatherings that year.

**In 1891, Brother Williams began to publish a second magazine, *The Truth Gleaner*,** aimed primarily at non-believers in an attempt to garner their interest in the Truth. As he stated, it was “a monthly paper devoted to the gleaning and heralding of the truth concerning the problem of life here and hereafter, the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land, the return of Christ as King of the earth, and the signs of the approaching end of Gentile Times.” (This publication was discontinued six years later when subscriptions “fell off” to an unsustainable level.)

**Brother Williams devoted considerable space in *The Advocate* to his positions and efforts in regard to false and dangerous doctrines as well as to his travels to distant ecclesias to lecture, debate, and respond to ecclesial needs and problems.** He was frequently called upon to answer questions relating to the interpretation of difficult passages and problems of daily life for those striving to walk in the way of Truth. He began addressing these questions and problems in a new column in *The Advocate* titled “Questions Answered.” In 1892, he started a Sunday school program that proved to be quite popular with the young people. Questions were posed each month in *The Advocate* and the students were to send in their answers. The correct answers were then published in a later issue.

**In the fall of that same year (1892), the Williams family moved again; this time to a much larger and more central location – Chicago, Illinois. This relocation met with general approval from the brotherhood including Brother Roberts, who stated, “His work will be much more**

**influenced for good at a central place like Chicago...**" This comment was abundantly borne out in the next year with the writing and printing of a new pamphlet entitled *The Great Salvation*. Several thousand copies were distributed to visitors at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and specifically at the "World's Congress of Religions" that was held in conjunction with it (see article "*The Great Salvation at Work*" in this issue).

Brother Williams continued his active travel schedule throughout North America over the next few years. In 1895 he undertook a particularly heavy schedule of speaking tours, making five journeys that year, lecturing at eleven different venues, and delivering a total of about fifty addresses. In addition, as was typical of religious speakers of the period, Brother Williams participated in lengthy public debates with ministers and theologians representing other denominations (see article "Thomas Williams' Debates and Their Topics" in this issue). Yet, with all these out-of-town obligations, he did not neglect *The Advocate* or his duties at his home ecclesia in Chicago, where he regularly gave public lectures in addition to exhortations on Sunday mornings.

**In 1897, Brother Williams wrote and published a series of articles in *The Advocate* on the fundamental principles of the Truth. This effort was inspired by the continuing controversy within the brotherhood over the resurrectional responsibility question.** The series of articles became the basis for his well-known book, *The World's Redemption*. It was first published in 1898 and soon became an invaluable text for learning and teaching the Truth. Sadly, in this same year, tragedy struck the Christadelphian body in the form of a major division over the doctrine of resurrectional responsibility to the judgment seat of Christ (primarily in Great Britain). Also that same year, the Christadelphian community suffered the sudden and unexpected death of Brother Robert Roberts.

**The responsibility controversy continued unabated into the new century with no part of the Household untouched by it.** With the avowed purpose of trying to restore unity, Brother Williams undertook a prolonged tour of the eastern United States in February, 1900. In May of that year, he finally undertook his previously postponed visit to Britain, meeting Brethren C. C. Walker and Henry Sulley in Birmingham, and Brother John James Andrew in London. Brother Walker was reluctant to speak as "representative" of the British Christadelphians, but strongly counseled Brother Williams to support and accept the Amendment. During this trip, Brother and Sister Williams also visited Mumbles, Wales, from which they had emigrated some 28 years earlier. The couple was greeted with joy by the brethren there, many of whom were relatives. The Williams party set sail for home on August 11, 1900 after their extensive visit to Britain.

In the April, 1902 *Advocate*, Brother Williams published, “A Plea for Action in Furtherance of Justice, Looking Towards Union and Unity” addressed to Christadelphians throughout the world. In it he proceeded to prove from past published works of Doctor Thomas, Robert Roberts and Henry Sulley that these brethren had held and taught the very same doctrines that he was upholding, doctrines now claimed by his opponents to be heretical.

**In October 1903, Brother and Sister Williams visited Britain again** at the invitation of Albert Hall of the Sowerby Bridge ecclesia in Yorkshire, and John Owler of the Barnsbury Hall, Islington ecclesia in London. Prior to their departure, all eight children convened in Chicago to see their parents off. The purpose of this visit was, in Brother Williams’ mind, to promote peace over the resurrectional responsibility controversy and to speak out against fundamental errors relating to the nature of man, the nature and sacrifice of Christ, baptism, and partial inspiration. Unfortunately, this second visit to Britain, which ended in June 1904, did not have the desired result of bringing the two sides closer together. **Nevertheless, Brother Williams was heartened as there were a number of individuals and ecclesias that did embrace his positions on the issues and expressed a common desire for unification.**

In retrospect, Brother Williams believed his travels and work both in Britain and back home in North America had been productive overall. He was quoted late in 1904 saying, “Ecclesially, the outlook in the US and Canada is quite encouraging...The editor’s tours this fall (to Arkansas, Ontario, New York State and Kentucky) have been very gratifying, in that they have enabled us to see good results of a hard fought battle which had for its aim...the destruction of the ‘whole Advocate fraternity.’”

In the winter of 1905-06, the Williams’ thoughts turned to the sunny south, and they traveled to Florida in March at the invitation of Brother and Sister McDaniel of the Orlando Ecclesia. While the primary purpose of this visit was for rest and recuperation from some health issues, Brother Williams was called upon to preach to the public in Central Florida, delivering a total of eight lectures that were well received and favorably reported upon in the local newspaper.

**After several more domestic speaking tours over the next number of months, Brother Williams again made plans to return to England.** This third trip was the most extensive, lasting from June 1907 to August 1908, involving visits to some twenty ecclesias. But, unfortunately, the Amended ecclesias remained aloof with Brother C.C. Walker refusing to even meet with him. While away, he left *The Advocate* in the capable hands of Brother James Leask along with Brother and Sister Williams’ daughter Bessie, and others who were willing to lend a helping hand.



The process of division between the Amended and Unamended fellowships was formally recognized in November 1909 when Brother Williams published the *Unamended Statement of Faith*, which was in effect the old 1878 *Birmingham Statement of Faith* (BSF) with seven

“corrections” made, for which Brother Williams sought and received the Advocate community’s feedback and approval. The new statement became known colloquially as the “BUSF” (though the “B” for “Birmingham” had in fact been dropped).



Mumbles, Wales Ecclesia in 1908

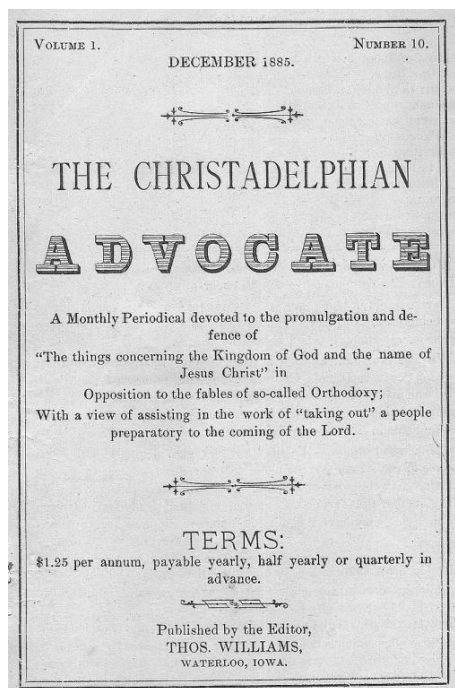
Brother and Sister Williams are seated in the center.

**Having taken another vacation to Florida in 1910, Brother and Sister Williams decided to relocate both their home and magazine from Chicago to Orlando.** The actual move took place in November of that year. It was anticipated that the move would curtail his travels because of the greater distances involved, but this did not turn out to be the case. Fraternal gatherings were on the rise around the continent, and Brother Williams was often invited to speak at them, which he accommodated when possible.

In August 1913, Brother and Sister Williams made their fourth and final visit to Great Britain, visiting several ecclesias in Yorkshire and around London. His mission this visit was to encourage and strengthen the things that remained. His plan was to complete the series of lectures and meetings that had been arranged, and then to spend more time in Mumbles before their return voyage home. But, sadly he experienced an increasing loss of strength with several attacks of vertigo, and had to be carried off the train upon arrival at the Swansea station from London. **Brother William’s health continued to fail and he fell asleep, awaiting his Lord’s return, on December 8, 1913, at the age of 66.** His fruitful life in the Truth thus came to an end in the very place in which he had found and embraced it in his younger years: his wife’s old home in Wales. We can be assured that he died with the strong hope that he had modeled and encouraged in others; with the purpose he manifested to brethren far and wide still sounding in his heart: *For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain* (Acts 28:20).

Ken Wood, Brattleboro, VT

## The Advocate's Early Trials and Perseverance



Having established himself as an able expounder and defender of the Truth at home and through lecture tours and debates, Thomas Williams endeavored to edit and publish a periodical which he named *The Christadelphian Advocate*. With publication of the first issue in March 1885, he would not have imagined that his effort would endure for over 128 years. Indeed, within the realm of magazines, *The Advocate* is an insignificant publication with an inconsequential circulation to a readership of no commercial importance. Yet it has endured; endured beyond some notable giants of the magazine industry; enduring despite periods of controversy and financial

difficulties. Brother Williams opened the March 1885 issue with the following statement on the publication's name:

*"The Christadelphian Advocate ... The word "Christadelphian" having become what it was intended to be – a distinguished name – we have chosen it on that account, so that it might be distinctly understood that we belong to, and shall to the best of our ability represent, that sect everywhere spoken against. "Advocate" has been selected because our object is to devote ourselves to the advocacy of those Bible truths, which are essential to be believed in order to become brethren of Christ, or Christadelphians."* (*The Advocate*, Vol.1, No.1, March 1885, p. 2)

*The Advocate* has been published continuously since March 1885 with the exception of a one year suspension in 1935, establishing it as the second longest running Christadelphian publication in operation today. In this short review, we will examine some of the history of *The Advocate* in its early years and its significance to the Unamended Christadelphian community. Since the division of the Household in 1898, *The Advocate* has been universally recognized as an Unamended magazine promoting and defending pre-amendment Christadelphian beliefs. The history of the publication over the past 128 years reflects the beliefs, issues and

personalities of that period, presenting in effect, a microcosm of Unamended Christadelphia.

**The appearance of *The Advocate* posed a dilemma for some brethren as to which magazine to subscribe to** – this new magazine, or the familiar *Christadelphian* edited by Brother Robert Roberts of Birmingham, England (first published in July 1864 under the name *Ambassador of the Coming Age*, changed to *The Christadelphian* in July, 1869). Brother Williams had noted in the opening article already referenced:

“The *Christadelphian* has grown with the Christadelphians, and *vice versa*, not *only* in bulk and numbers, but in the knowledge and wisdom of God as unfolded in the Scriptures of Divine truth. The growth of the *Christadelphian* has to a large extent placed it beyond the reach of the seeker after the “first principles of the truth,” and those young in the same. This fact, along with a desire for a more direct medium of communication on matters of a practical character, has conceived, and given birth to the CHRISTADELPHIAN ADVOCATE.”

Up until this point *The Christadelphian* was the only Christadelphian magazine in general circulation and subscribers were loyal to it. For some the question arose as to Brother Williams’ motivation and agenda, questioning whether or not *The Advocate* would turn out to be an “opposition paper,” and whether or not the Truth might be better served through the maintenance of a single magazine. That same concern was held by Brother Roberts, and Brother Williams found himself having to publicly assert that *The Advocate* was not an opposition paper. It was not until August 1888 that Brother Roberts, after meeting with Brother Williams, announced,

“There is no longer any reason for the continuance of the reserve which I have felt...your manifest faithfulness to the truth as a whole has removed obstacles to co-operation... With every good wish in Christ Jesus our Lord, judge and friend, faithfully your brother, Robert Roberts.” (*The Advocate*, September 1888, “A Letter from the Editor of The Christadelphian,” pp. 193-197)

**Support for *The Advocate*, both in subscriptions and contributions, has varied throughout its existence.** The magazine was “owned and controlled” by Brother Williams during his lifetime, and proceeds from the magazine and pamphlet/book sales are assumed to have contributed to some extent to the Williams family’s support. We do not know how much that income was relied upon nor do we know the source and amount of contributions Brother Williams received for his prolific efforts in teaching and preaching throughout his lifetime, but it seems finances were always a

concern. In the July 1885 issue, Brother Williams mentioned the fact that some contributions promised to help *The Advocate* get established had not materialized, affecting specifically the quality of the paper he had to utilize. He suggested, “A trifle from each ecclesia would ease the burden for the first year, after which, from present indications, the Advocate will be self-sustaining” (over \$50.00 was recorded as received in the following month’s issue). Though it appears the magazine did at least become “self-sustaining,” we get a peek into the magazine’s financial health through Brother Williams’ response to an inquiry in 1908:

“A brother wrote us a year ago asking, What do you think of the suggestion some have made to me, of having a small paper here in Canada? This was a delicate question to one already editing and publishing a paper of the same kind as the one proposed. Our answer was and is, The field for publication is open to all, and it is not the property of any one. But we are few in number and unable to support many papers; and competition should be avoided. The Advocate knows quite well the struggle it had to get on its feet and be able to walk, and it is not able to run yet at the age of twenty-four years. Two financial weaklings may not find enough to support them, and the result may be that both would die, while one may be able to continue ‘walking’ and be satisfied if it is never able to ‘run.’ This is our answer, frank and fair, to inquiries under this heading.” (*The Advocate*, October 1908, “Periodicals, Past, Present and Future,” page 307)

*The Advocate’s* annual subscription rate during Brother Williams’ editorship was \$1.25 at the beginning in March 1885, and \$2.00 at his death in December 1913. When Brother Williams fell asleep in December 1913, the editorship passed to Brother A. H. Zilmer as had been recommended by Brother Williams. Three years later Brother Zilmer was removed from his position as editor; notice given in the May 1917 *Advocate* that, “The *Advocate* Committee...wishes to make the statement to our readers that through the stress of circumstances it feels compelled to take the editorial management of the *Advocate* into its own hands.” The sole reason stated was the “decreasing circulation” with subscriptions “inadequate to pay the editor \$50 per month” while fulfilling other obligations and costs. (Also mentioned was an “amount to be paid to Sister Williams.”) From that point forward, the editors of the *Advocate* have not received any monetary compensation for their time and efforts.

**The preeminent goal of *The Advocate* over the years has been the preservation of Bible Truth**, as declared in the title of the magazine and as Brother Williams declared in the very first issue – “‘Advocate’ has been selected because our object is to devote ourselves to the advocacy of those

Bible truths, which are essential to be believed in order to become brethren of Christ, or Christadelphians.” The guiding principle of the magazine is embodied in the statement printed on each *Advocate* front cover, “***A monthly magazine in defense of the “Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ” as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to “Taking Out A People For Yahweh’s Name.”***”

Looking back over its work all these years we find a revealing chronicle of faithfulness to the magazine’s founding principles and an intriguing story of determination as well as perseverance in the face of trials and opposition. Not all that constitutes the history of *The Advocate* is admirable for it represents the efforts of men; yet its legacy of stalwartness on behalf of the truths the Unamended community has held so dear serve as an example and a source of encouragement to Unamended brethren. The back cover feature, “Doctrines Christadelphians Believe and Teach,” serves as a familiar reminder of the Advocate’s legacy.

**We hope this brief review will broaden understanding and appreciation for the trials and perseverance that Brother Williams endured in publishing and maintaining the Advocate in the face of hardship and controversy.** We conclude this review with a portion of the reflective (and in retrospect, prophetic) statements in the last editorial that Thomas Williams wrote, titled...

### **The Flight of Time**

“This number of The Christadelphian Advocate ends the twenty-ninth year of its career, and, in the absence of the Master, it will soon be in its thirtieth year, when its editor will be in the fiftieth year of his probation for life eternal, and his companion, the wife of his youth, will be in the forty-ninth year of her pilgrimage Zion-ward.

It is only when we pause to take our bearings as to where we are that we are brought to realize the swiftness of the flight of time. Well might the question be asked and answered: “What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” All we can do in the face of the fact of the brevity of mortal life is, “Redeem the time, for the days are evil.”

This is what the Advocate has striven to do, with the help of its friends, whose practical help and encouraging words have enabled us to know that its continuance year after year could be due to no other reason than that of its merit in the particular sphere in which it has humbly, yet fearlessly worked...” (*Advocate*, December 1913, The Flight of Time, page 349)

*Jim Washeck, St. Peters, MO*

## Thomas Williams' Debates and Their Topics

**Throughout his life, Brother Williams was an active lecturer and debater,** holding the things of Yahweh as precious and His Word as *quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword*. A defender of the faith, he said concerning debating, "I have never yet failed to meet a man after I had agreed to do so."<sup>1</sup>

The bibliography prepared and published in 1974 by *The Christadelphian Advocate* Committee for the book *Life and Works of Thomas Williams* was reviewed for references to Brother Williams'

**...debates were typically several days to a week in length including upwards of 15 sessions...**

debates, and is the primary source of the following debate chronology. There are incidental mentions of other debates (sometimes referenced as "Discussions") involving Brother Williams, formal or informal, for which details are not recorded in available resources; therefore, the following listing is not a comprehensive record of his debate activities.

**First a word about debates in the late 1800s.** They were popular, usually well-organized and followed a common protocol. Typically, the debaters or sponsors of the debate entered into a series of written correspondence over a period of months to establish the debate topics and the debate format. Once this was agreed upon, an advertisement in the form of a flyer or circular was prepared and notices published in newspapers and/or in the respective debater's periodicals. At long last, the debate took place in a meeting hall, church building, tent structure or any number of other venues. Occasionally, as happened with Brother Williams, the debate organizers were unsuccessful in reaching agreement on the subjects, timing and location, with the result that no debate was scheduled though considerable time and effort had been expended.

**The debate chronology below contains thirteen recorded debates over twenty-five years of Brother Williams' life.** This may seem a relatively small number over that number of years, but placed in the context of his extensive travels, lecture preparation (both public and fraternal), *Advocate* magazine preparation, the effort it took to reach agreement on the debates themselves, and the fact that debates were typically several days to a week in length including upwards of 15 sessions, it appears that Brother Williams' schedule was very full and demanding. **Documented debates include:**

**1881, Riverside, Iowa:** A local Campbellite, Colonel Billings, debated Brother Williams on four successive nights. The two topics were, "Was the kingdom of heaven established in the first century?" and "Man in the death

state is totally unconscious.” These were referred to as “discussions” and not formally labeled as debates. However, they created considerable excitement and were well attended.<sup>2</sup>

**1884, April; Ward’s Mills (near Marion), Illinois:** A “public discussion” was undertaken with a Baptist Minister, Mr. Smith, for four days, two sessions daily.<sup>3</sup>

**1884, Winter; Waterloo, Iowa:** Brother Williams debated a Campbellite minister (the name of the debater and topics are not recorded). The debate, held as a public discussion, was for several nights in very inclement weather with the cold described as very intense. A local brother reported, “The large hall was well filled” and “the general verdict of the audience is that the Christadelphians had the best of it.”<sup>4</sup>

**1887, October; Ward’s Mills (near Marion), Illinois:** Brother Williams met Mr. Throgmorton, a Baptist, in debate.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Throgmorton did not fare well, as Brother Williams would remark some ten years later when debating another Baptist, Dr. J.N. Hall, that, “There is no doubt that the Baptists expected more from Mr. Hall than Mr. Throgmorton had done in his debate.”<sup>6</sup>

**1887, October; Guelph, Ontario:** Mr. F.W. Grant of Plainfield, New Jersey, representing the Plymouth Brethren, debated Brother Williams over nine evenings. The topics covered the immortal soul, the state of the dead, the punishment of the wicked, and the reward of the righteous.<sup>7</sup> It was agreed that each speaker open each night with a half-hour speech, and that the remaining hour be divided into fifteen minute periods each for Socratic Method questions and answers, and fifteen minutes each for closing comments. Mr. Grant had previously been in a book publishing duel with Brother Robert Roberts over the subject of immortality: Mr. Grant publishing “Life and Immortality,” Brother Roberts responding with, “Man Mortal;” and Mr. Grant’s reply, “Facts and Theories of Future State.” One can see that Brother Williams’ debate was well primed. A record of the debate was published at a cost of \$108, which included the reporting and transcribing for the nine nights.<sup>8</sup>

**1888, April; Hamilton Ontario:** The subject was generally described as, “The respective merits of the teachings of the Bible versus the teachings of Secularism.” Mr. Charles Watts of Toronto debated Brother Williams during the four evenings of April 17-20, 1888 specifically covering:

- April 17 – “That the Bible is Divine in its origin, perfect in its teachings, and a safe and reliable guide for human conduct.” Brother Williams taking the affirmative; Mr. Watts taking the negative.

- April 18 – “That the Bible is human in its origin, imperfect and unsafe in its teachings, and unreliable as a guide for human conduct.” Mr. Watts, affirmative; Brother Williams, negative.
- April 19 – “That the teachings of the Bible are superior to the teachings of Secularism, and better suited to meet the needs of mankind.” Brother Williams, affirmative; Mr. Watts, negative.
- April 20 – “That the teachings of Secularism are superior to the teachings of the Bible, and better suited to meet the needs of mankind.” Mr. Watts, affirmative; Brother Williams, negative.

Additional detail on the debate can be found in *The Christadelphian Advocate* magazine, Volume 4 (1888); specifically in the June/July issue beginning on page 156; the August issue beginning on page 176; and the October issue beginning on page 232.<sup>9</sup>

**1894, January; Chicago Illinois:** This debate between Mr. Clark Braden and Brother Williams encompassed seven nights. *The Christadelphian Advocate*, February 1894, page 47, records, “The audience showed its sympathy with the position taken by Brother Williams from the first.” The subject considered was, “Were all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments relative to the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom on earth fulfilled during the first Christian century?” Mr. Braden took the affirmative; Brother Williams denying the proposition. The debate was published in May 1894 and contained 270 pages and is referred to as the “Braden-Williams Debate” in the listing of published works by Brother Williams.<sup>10</sup>

**1898, August 1st; Zion (near Henderson) Kentucky:** Baptist Dr. J.N. Hall of Fulton, Kentucky, considered a very able man by his parishioners, after almost two years of negotiating debate terms, met Brother Williams for a debate held in an open grove and lasting six days. It attracted wide attention with attendance averaging over 2,000 persons each day. A booklet published in March 1899 documented the debate, which considered four propositions:

- The Scriptures teach that the Kingdom of Heaven was set up during the personal ministry of Christ. Mr. Hall affirming and Brother Williams denying.
- The Scriptures teach that all that constitutes man will be totally unconscious from the time of death till the resurrection. Brother Williams affirming and Mr. Hall denying.
- The Scriptures teach that there will be a general resurrection from the dead of all mankind who die. Mr. Hall affirming and Brother Williams denying.



- The Scriptures teach that the final punishment of the wicked will consist in the total extinction of their being. Brother Williams affirming and Mr. Hall denying.

The four propositions were debated in twelve sessions of two hours each. Each session consisted of an opening one half hour speech by the affirmer, followed by a one half hour speech by the denier. Next was a closing one half hour speech by the affirmer and closing one half hour speech by the denier; thus, totaling the two hours per session. At the conclusion of the debate, Brother Williams had delivered 24 speeches! To further add to the complexity, it was the speaker's prerogative to use his closing one half hour as a speech only or undertake fifteen minutes of questions posed to the opponent in which they spontaneously answered (Brother Williams much favored this Socratic Method of discussion), ending with a fifteen minute speech. With this level of organization, one can easily grasp the need for extensive preparation and nimbleness of mind throughout the debate. This was the first of two planned debates.<sup>11</sup>

**1898, August; Creal Springs, Illinois:**

The second debate with Dr. J.N. Hall was held in Creal Springs, Illinois, which is about 120 miles west of the first debate's

**At the conclusion of the debate, Brother Williams had delivered 24 speeches... With this level of organization, one can easily grasp the need for extensive preparation and nimbleness of mind throughout the debate.**

location of Zion, Kentucky. The basis for discussion was called the "Church Propositions," the subject matter being kept general in character, which was contrary to Brother Williams' preference for specific propositions. Ten sessions were undertaken over five days and followed the previous debate's format including being held in an open grove. Brother Williams mentions four previous debates in earlier times held in or near Creal Springs, but no detail was provided other than they were with a Baptist, a Campbellite, a Latter-day Saint, and another Baptist.<sup>12</sup>

**1899, April; Chicago Illinois:** Over a two-week period, Mr. James Inglis of the Anglo-Israel Society debated Brother Williams on two propositions:

- The Scriptures teach that the Ten Tribes of Israel taken captive by Assyria should be organized into a kingdom before their restoration, with the other two tribes to the land of Palestine; and that such organization is to be identified with Great Britain and the United States today. Mr. Inglis affirming and Brother Williams denying.

- That the Ten Tribes of Israel were to remain in dispersion and disorganized from their Assyrian captivity till the return of Christ. Brother Williams affirming and Mr. Inglis denying.

The audience is described as “fair” in size and is said to have expressed considerable interest in the things of the Truth expounded by Brother Williams. Mr. Inglis claimed that when Zedekiah was overthrown, the royalty continued through one of his daughters down to Queen Victoria, and that the kingdom of Great Britain is today the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of God. Brother Williams wrote, “It is difficult to imagine a more groundless theory than Anglo-Israelism. The delusion arises from a failure to discern the real hope of Israel.”<sup>13</sup>

**1899, August; Martinville, Arkansas:** The occasion for the debate was because Brother Martin “had broken into the ranks of the Adventists and enlightened some of their members in the way of life; two of their preachers having recently obeyed the Truth. There were evidences that others will follow.” To stem the tide, Dr. Snowdon, a leading local Adventist, undertook a three-day debate with Brother Williams. Dr. Snowdon did poorly defending his theories of Adventism and Russellism while Brother Williams’ arguments impressed the audience.<sup>14</sup>

**In the early 1900s, it became increasingly difficult to arrange debates.** Brother Williams’ reputation as a skillful debater had become well established. Many ecclesias undertook to arrange debates with the likes of Dr. Torrey and Rev. John J. Higgs, both of whose approaches were to frighten people into conversion by preaching “hellfire” doctrine. In the end, however, these men and others did not make themselves available for debate.

**1906, February; Chicago, Illinois:** For two evenings, Mr. John H. Paton, a universalist believing that all dead men are good men, debated Brother Williams on two propositions:

- The Bible teaches that all mankind shall finally be saved. Mr. Paton affirming and Brother Williams denying.
- The Bible teaches that the punishment of the wicked will result in their final destruction. Brother Williams affirming and Mr. Paton denying.

The debate was published as a booklet in May 1909.<sup>15</sup>

**1906, August; Sebree, Kentucky:** Just eighteen miles south of Henderson, Kentucky, Baptist minister J. B. Hardy debated Brother Williams for seven days, two sessions each day and one evening session; fifteen in all. Mr. Hardy, a slight man of 35, was a very loud speaker, uncouth and seemed “experimental” in his method of debate. Attendance was not large at the

first, but quickly increased to a full capacity of 400 persons. Brother Williams wrote, “The interest became intense, and reports come now that many want to hear more of what Christadelphians believe, and some, who had never heard the Truth before, enthusiastically declared that we had sown seed in Seabee that could not be smothered, and would surely bear fruit.” The record of the debate was published in serial form later in the *Advocate*.<sup>16</sup>

**With Brother Thomas Williams’ sudden death on December 8, 1913, our community lost an able contender for the Truth.**

*Scott Cram, Richmond, VA*

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<sup>1</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate, December 1896, page 296.

<sup>2</sup> The Christadelphian, 1881, page 95; The Christadelphian Advocate, September 1899, pages 272-273.

<sup>3</sup> The Christadelphian, 1884, page 240.

<sup>4</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 4; The Christadelphian, 1884, pages 47-48.

<sup>5</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate, November 1887, page 250.

<sup>6</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate, December 1898, page 269.

<sup>7</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 6; Biographical Notes by Berton Little, page X.

<sup>8</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate, November 1887, page 252.

<sup>9</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 6; The Christadelphian Advocate, 1888, page 120, 156, 176, 232.

<sup>10</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, pages 10-11; The Christadelphian Advocate, August-September 1893, page 213 and February 1894, page 47.

<sup>11</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, pages 12-13; The Christadelphian Advocate, December 1896, page 294 and February 1898, inside front cover and March 1898, page 85 and September 1898, pages 265 to 271; The Hall-Williams Debate Flier/Announcement by the Chicago Advocate Publishing House.

<sup>12</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 16; The Christadelphian Advocate, March 1898, page 85 and September 1898, pages 265 to 271.

<sup>13</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 18; The Christadelphian Advocate, May 1899, pages 159-160 and June 1899, pages 173-177.

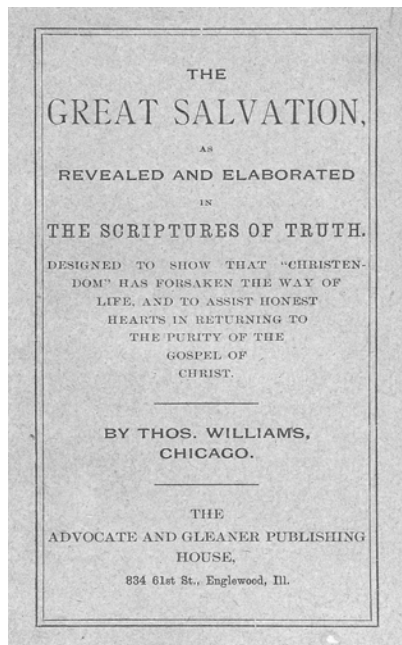
<sup>14</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 18; The Christadelphian Advocate, October 1899, pages 297-298.

<sup>15</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate, February 1907, page 57; May 1907, May, page 155; and May 1909, page 155.

<sup>16</sup> Life and Works of Thomas Williams, page 32; The Christadelphian Advocate, September 1906, pages 202 - 203; and October 1906, page 320; and June 1907, page 171.

## *The Great Salvation at Work*

In 1891, the Jersey City ecclesia in Brooklyn, NY reported through *The Advocate* a positive experience in proclaiming the Truth by securing an information booth at the annual American Institute Fair.<sup>1</sup> Over a period of five weeks, brothers and sisters manned the booth and provided literature to all those that stopped to hear the Word. In that same article, the recording brother of the ecclesia noted that the upcoming World's Fair in Chicago might be a fruitful venue to undertake a similar effort. The Chicago Ecclesia embraced the suggestion, formed a committee, and sent out an appeal for support.<sup>2</sup> With Brother Thomas Williams as the chairman, the committee "deemed it best to concentrate our efforts in the public proclamation of the Truth at such times and places that might be arranged for hereafter, and in the judicious distribution of a pamphlet, to be specially prepared, in which the Truth will be set forth under various headings, with proof-texts in full in support of the different propositions (and also a review of the texts usually quoted in support of the so-called orthodox doctrines under the heading to which they belong), and showing such texts to be in harmony with the Truth."<sup>3</sup> The committee saw a need for this pamphlet as the distribution of books was far too expensive and the information "too voluminous to expect too many people to read."<sup>4</sup> The pamphlet, made available in the summer of 1893 and drawing on Hebrews 2:3, was entitled *The Great Salvation*.<sup>5</sup>



**The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was a celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World, and as such it was also known as the World's Columbian Exposition.** The fairgrounds were open from May to October and reportedly drew more than 25 million visitors.<sup>6</sup> Important to the brothers and sisters working to promote the Truth, the World's Fair was also the site of numerous congresses on various areas of human interest and study, including the Congress of Religions.<sup>7</sup> The World's Congress of Religions was held at the Art Institute and with so many different denominations housed inside, the brethren decided to

“distribute the books at the doors of the halls.”<sup>8</sup> After several days of distributing books on the steps of the building, the organizers of the Congress prohibited the volunteering brethren from distributing literature on the grounds. As a result, the brethren were compelled to rent a small stand among the other book distributors within the Art Institute. At their stall, they simply posted a sign: “This book free; take one.”<sup>4</sup>

*The Great Salvation* distributed at the World’s Fair opened with the following appeal:

“To World’s Fair Visitors: This edition of “*The Great Salvation*” is issued specially for you. You may feel that you have not time to read it while you are visiting the Fair. If so, please do us the kindness and yourselves the justice of taking care of it till you return to your homes; and then lay aside all prejudice and read the little book carefully. Do you ask, Whence its source? We answer: The CHRISTADELPHIANS of the American continent, believing that the way outlined herein is the only way of salvation, and moved by the sense of their duty to God and their fellow-men, extend this little work to you as an olive branch of love, in the hope that it may help you obtain the blessings of the great salvation. Do you ask, Who are the CHRISTADELPHIANS? We answer: They are a people who believe the things set forth herein and try to faithfully practice the precepts of Christ, in the hope of realizing the great salvation.”

(There is a great deal of earnestness, personality, and concern for our “fellow-men” expressed in this short introduction.)

***The Great Salvation’s mode of Biblical exposition is first and foremost the proof-text.*** The work consists of 35 propositions that each set forth a Biblical truth, some with multiple subheadings, principally supported by quotations of Scripture and some with extra explanatory text. The treatment of each proposition is quite varied. For example, “There will be a personal and literal return of Christ to reign on the Earth” (#32) includes 23 proof-texts; whereas, “Many learned men deny the immortality of the soul, and show that it came from a heathen source” (#17) directly cites no Scripture, but instead quotes Isaac Newton, Justin Martyr, William Tyndall, Edward Gibbon, and others. The explanatory text often attempts to interpret the cited proofs and frequently lays out the author’s argument why the position is true.

Today, proof-texting is frequently viewed with suspicion and disdain. However, proof-texting is a scripturally sound approach to understanding and explaining the Bible. Effectively, all the New Testament writers cite Old Testament passages in support of their own writings, so the practice stands

on firm ground. The current challenges to the proof-text arise not from the concept, but more from the misapplication of the method. Proof-texting by nature does not provide the broader context of the verse, leading many individuals to misrepresent or misinterpret the Scriptures, e.g. failing to identify Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12 as the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4). *The Great Salvation* manages to avoid these challenges through the use of the explanatory text to interpret the proofs as a whole, and also to explain why these passages are incompatible with popular beliefs.

**What is more notable within the explanatory text, however, is the tone of the writing.** The sentiments of the appeal made on the inside cover of the pamphlet are faithfully carried through the whole work. The pamphlet reads as a

**He evidently saw the wisdom of the right approach for the right audience. *The Great Salvation* stands as a testament that earnest, concerned, and loving speech are in perfect harmony with the doctrines of the Truth.**

genuine attempt at a friendly conversation. The reader is addressed as “dear reader” nearly thirty times. The pamphlet asks the reader to be patient. The reader is assured that these may be difficult words or that the author knows that readers may “be surprised to find how far they are from teaching the popular notions...” Also, there are attempts to comfort the reader such as, “earnest study of the Scriptures will remove these difficulties.” Within the pages of *The Advocate* Brother Williams was not reluctant to use a direct, confrontational style when necessary. However, he evidently saw the wisdom of the right approach for the right audience. *The Great Salvation* stands as a testament that earnest, concerned, and loving speech are in perfect harmony with the doctrines of the Truth.

***The Great Salvation* is structured to guide the reader through a logical progression of three distinct steps:** 1) recognition of the false beliefs that get in the way of salvation; 2) what is God’s plan of salvation; and 3) what is necessary to be saved. The propositions are grouped into three parts that follow this logical chain. The bulk of the work is dedicated to disproving the tenets of apostate Christianity. The main topics within this section include the Trinity, the immortality of the soul, and the devil. For example, the proposition on *sheol*, *hades*, and *gehenna* does much to remove the KJV’s unclear treatment of the words “grave” and “hell.” Part Two, which covers God’s plan of salvation, is the section of the pamphlet that really highlights Christadelphian understanding of the Scriptures. This section introduces the Abrahamic covenant and ties it to Jesus Christ by covering the coming kingdom on earth, the literal return of Jesus, and the kingdom as the restored

kingdom of Israel: “Not only do these testimonies prove clearly that Christ is personally to return to the earth, but they show that there is no reward for the righteous till He does come.”<sup>8</sup> Part Three begins with a summary of the condemnation from Adam and the state of separation from God under which all men are born, and proceeds to the need to be associated with the name of Christ. Thereafter follows propositions on the atonement and baptism.

**Reviewing *The Great Salvation* one hundred and twenty years after its first publication does reveal some features that were a product of its time period and targeted audience.** First, the committee specifically sought to target the World’s Fair attendants that were “religiously disposed.”<sup>3</sup> As such, the work assumes readers hold the Scriptures as the word of God and have a basic familiarity with the Bible (e.g., it does not recount history or provide much context for verses or discussions addressing specific individuals). Second, the time period in which it was first produced leads to some obvious omissions in the eyes of modern readers. For example, the work contains nothing about evolution; again, it assumes the reader believes in creation and God. The pamphlet also reflects the norms of its contemporary society. The first three propositions, “it does make a difference what we believe;” “there is only one Gospel that will save;” and “we must believe in the true God;” are all clearly intended to impress adherents of apostate Christianity. These are accurate and true points, but much more attention to these topics would be necessary to make headway with the vague and shallow beliefs of the modern generation. These limitations do not devalue the work. Its material and framework for comprehensively describing the Truth are still appropriate, yet we should consider these points when describing the faith that is within us to those unfamiliar with the Truth.

With the printing of the 16,000<sup>th</sup> copy, an “appendix” of objections was added as Part Four (as found in current editions).<sup>9</sup> At their core, each of the “objections to be answered” addresses passages misconstrued to support the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Later an article by Brother Williams from 1898 was added as Part Five.

***The Great Salvation* had an immediate as well as a lasting impact after the Fair.** Evidently, it quickly became an education tool after its introduction: ecclesias ordered multiple copies, the work was handed out to acquaintances new and old, and *The Advocate* received letters from people interested to read its contents from across the nation.<sup>10,11,12</sup> Nearly every issue of *The Advocate* in the years after the Fair included a story or letter about the effects of the work. (The Worcester, MA ecclesia translated it into Swedish,<sup>13</sup> and interest sparked by *The Great Salvation* prompted the creation of the first catalogue of Christadelphian books.)<sup>14</sup> The brethren in

attendance at the World's Fair came armed with an initial printing of 10,000 copies of *The Great Salvation*. During the Fair they ordered an additional 3,000 copies and soon after printed even more. The preface of the 1973 reprint of *The Great Salvation* reported the total number of copies printed to that date as 105,000.

**As the booklet concludes**, the Unamended Christadelphians hold that Christendom and the world have gone far astray from the Word of God. *The Great Salvation* sets forth a good and comprehensive framework for organizing our own thoughts, can serve as an aid in memory verse study, and is still a strong basis for studying with children or those interested in the Truth – especially when those studying can read it together and use the proofs and explanations to launch into further Bible inquiry. As the original booklet concludes:

“We have now before us the way of the great salvation. You will conclude that if this is the only salvation and the only way of salvation set forth in the Bible, then Christendom has gone far astray; and you will possibly stagger before the question, How can so many be wrong? Remember that the same question might have been asked by Noah and by the faithful in the days of Jesus. But the many were wrong and only few were right. Truth is truth regardless of whether few or many believe it. It is your privilege to believe and obey the Truth and then to walk worthy of its glorious end.”<sup>15</sup>

*Josh Vest, Bronxville, NY*

*Editor's Note: Digital copies of several Advocate articles describing the experiences, events, and conversations at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, as well as the effects of The Great Salvation (both positive and negative), have been made available at [www.christadelphianaudio.org/GS.html](http://www.christadelphianaudio.org/GS.html).*

<sup>1</sup> Andrew W. The World's Fair and the Truth. *The Christadelphian Advocate*. December, 1891, pp. 302-304.

<sup>2</sup> Walls CB. The World's Fair Suggestion. *The Christadelphian Advocate*. June, 1892, pp. 123-125.

<sup>3</sup> Leaske J. The World's Fair Movement. *The Christadelphian Advocate*. December, 1892, pp. 307-308.

<sup>4</sup> Williams T. The Truth and the World's Fair. *The Christadelphian Advocate*. November, 1893, pp. 241-246.

<sup>5</sup> Leask J. Notes. *The Christadelphian Advocate*. August/September, 1893, inside front cover.

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. World's Columbian Exposition. 05 Aug 2013. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/649070/Worlds-Columbian-Exposition>>.

<sup>7</sup> Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. The Worlds Congress of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition. <<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=1&sn=4>> 05 Aug 2013.



<sup>8</sup> Williams T. The Great Salvation. 1995 Edition, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate. September, 1894, Notes, back cover

<sup>10</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate. May, 1894, inside front cover.

<sup>11</sup> Williams T. The Editor's Tour South. The Christadelphian Advocate. November, 1893, pp. 250-255.

<sup>12</sup> Leask J. Notes. The Christadelphian Advocate. July, 1893, back cover.

<sup>13</sup> Carlson AW. The Truth in the Swedish Language. The Christadelphian Advocate. October, 1895, inside back cover.

<sup>14</sup> The Christadelphian Advocate. March, 1894, back cover.

<sup>15</sup> Williams T. The Great Salvation. 1995 Edition, p. 52.



## Fellowship

*Brother Thomas Williams left for his second voyage to England in the fall of 1903. He was in England for nine months to promote peace over the resurrectional responsibility controversy and to speak out against fundamental errors relating to the nature of man, resurrectional responsibility, partial inspiration, etc. The Christadelphian had published charges and accusations against his teachings, and numerous meetings were arranged to allow brethren to hear for themselves what Brother Williams actually taught. In his presentation delivered at Barnsbury Hall, questions were submitted and Brother Williams promised a "frank" response. Below is question number four (of seventeen), which relates to his fellowship position in regard to resurrectional responsibility of the enlightened rejecter to the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

**Question 4:** How will you act toward those (both in England and America) who believe and teach that light is the ground of responsibility, and those who believe that unbaptized Gentiles will be raised to the Judgment Seat of Christ?

**Answer:** My "plea for unity" explains that. The Birmingham brethren having departed from the truth on Adamic condemnation, and tampering with the Old Statement of Faith, and weaving into it resurrection for Gentiles for "good or for bad" out of Christ, on the same basis as those in Covenant relationship, makes fellowship impossible...

Thomas Williams

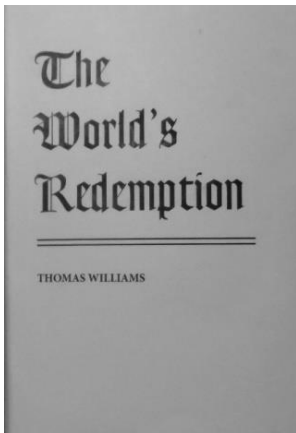
"Resurrectional Responsibility"

Reprinted in *Life and Works of Thomas Williams*, p. 179

## ***The World's Redemption***

“And now, in conclusion, dear reader, my prayer is that the humble effort put forth in this book may be helpful in bringing many into the path of life whom we may meet in the presence of our Lord, returned to earth again, to receive his smiles and approbation, which shall fill our hearts with eternal joy and thrill us with the ecstasies of that life which shall know no sickness, sorrow, pain or death.”<sup>1</sup>

With these words Brother Thomas Williams concludes his exposition of fundamental Bible truths before moving on to the final chapter in *The World's Redemption*, in which he answers objections and explains misinterpreted passages of Scripture. First published in part in 1898, *The World's Redemption* has been treasured as a source of sound Biblical exposition by the Unamended Christadelphian body for over a century. It provides a frame-work of first principles for those young in the Truth, exposes the failings and dangers of the apostasy for those learning the Truth, and contains stirring and strengthening exposition for those long in the Truth.



**The first announcement for *The World's Redemption* appeared in the June 1897 *Christadelphian Advocate*.** Several portions of the book were published in the *Advocate* prior to its release in book form. The announcement came at the conclusion of an article containing a section of the chapter, “The Covenants of Promise:”

“We are pleased to know that the chapters for Seekers after Truth are appreciated, because they are detached parts of the new book we are now writing, which will be entitled *The World's Redemption*. We are striving to make it simple

for learners and a complete and comprehensive work to help the perishing to find life and inheritance in the Kingdom of God.”<sup>2</sup>

**Initially the book was envisioned as consisting of three parts.** “Part I deals with the things concerning the Kingdom of God, leaving Part II to deal with the nature of man and what subjects come under the heading of ‘the things concerning the name.’”<sup>3</sup> Part III was to “answer all objections and explain passages of Scripture which are used against the truth herein set forth.”<sup>4</sup> The first section was completed and available for purchase in 1898 at a price of fifty cents for paper binding and seventy-five cents for cloth.

The initial publication contained fourteen chapters which covered the same material as that contained in the first twelve chapters of later editions.<sup>5</sup> Brother Williams saw fit to release the first part of the book partially due to demand, but also due to his belief that people would more willingly respond to the Gospel message if first presented through “the covenants of promise and Hope of Israel.”<sup>6</sup>

**Many of the subjects addressed in the book were already addressed to a lesser degree in the author’s previous work, *The Problem of Life: Or Man’s Relation to the Law of Sin and Death and Life and Immortality*.** This separate work addressed the state of the soul, the nature of man, the resurrection, the hope of immortality, the law of sin and death and the way to come out from under it. Prior to and after completion of *The World’s Redemption*, Brother Williams frequently referred readers to *The Problem of Life*,<sup>6</sup> which we find referenced alongside *The Great Salvation* on the title page of the second edition of *The World’s Redemption* and in every edition since then.

Eventually the book found its current form containing twenty-six chapters as initially published by *The Advocate Publishing House*. The book’s content reflected Brother Williams’ effort to publish a book that was comprehensive on the things needed to find God and life, such as the covenants of promise, the establishment of the Kingdom on earth, and the literal return of Christ to the earth; while also encompassing exposition concerning the commonly misunderstood topics of the devil and hell, the nature of God, the nature of Christ, and how redemption is obtained through Christ. As a follow up to the thorough exposition upon these subjects, the final chapter is set aside to address common objections or difficult passages which might appear to be in conflict with what had been presented in prior chapters, such as commonly misunderstood passages raised to support the immortality of the soul, heaven going, etc.

**The style of the book fits with that found in Brother Williams’ prior works such as *The Great Salvation*. The book feels more like a personal address from the author to the reader rather than a distant, analytical treatise.** The chapters are peppered with Brother Williams’ common appeal, “Now, dear reader...” Much of Brother Williams’ adult life was dedicated to teaching and upholding the Gospel message, and it is clear he hoped his writings would further that purpose with any who might open the book’s pages.

A total of 1500 copies of the first complete edition were printed and sold for \$1.50 each. Although a paltry sum today, it was a significant amount at the turn of the century. Contributions were made to help lower the price to \$1.00 so that it would be more affordable. The second edition, issued in 1913, was

the last edition to be overseen by the author. In it Brother Williams said he saw “no reason to add to or take from, or to change the subject matter.”<sup>7</sup> Since that time, the book has been republished in several further editions under the oversight of *The Advocate Publishing Committee*, with minor adjustments in page layout, deletion of the “three parts” designations, and the addition of “Biographical Notes” and Indexes beginning with the Third Edition.

*Zak Vest, Colorado Springs, CO*

<sup>1</sup> *The World's Redemption*, “Duties and Privileges of God's People,” p. 491

<sup>2</sup> *The Christadelphian Advocate*, June 1897, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christadelphian Advocate*, December 1897, “Notes” (inside front cover)

<sup>4</sup> *The Christadelphian Advocate*, January 1898, (insert between pp. 16-17)

<sup>5</sup> *The Christadelphian Advocate*, August 1899, (advertisement following p. 260)

<sup>6</sup> *The Christadelphian Advocate*, December 1898, “Advertisements”

<sup>7</sup> *The World's Redemption*, Preface to the Second Edition, p. v

## **The Kingdom of God to be Universal in the Earth**

...By what means does God's revealed plan provide for the great and universal remedy promised? ...The world's salvation is not to be found in man, it must proceed from God; ... It is no vain speculation to say that such a grand state of things awaits this burdened world of ours, and that it will be realized in the establishment of the kingdom of God universally in all the earth. ...when this kingdom of God sweeps from the face of the earth the wickedness of man and fills the earth to its utmost bounds with the glory of the Lord, the world's redemption will be a grand and glorious reality; ...

(Thomas Williams, *The World's Redemption*, Chapter 3, Introduction)



## **Thomas Williams' Miscellaneous Publications**

How fortunate we are to have the prolific works of Brother Thomas Williams to aid us in understanding and asserting the fundamental principles of the Truth! Brother Williams was a tenacious expositor and defender of the Truth, never hesitant to declare its teachings or to come to its aid when under attack. Brother Williams lived his life dedicated to teaching those principles of doctrine and walk that were so dear to his heart. He had an eloquent manner of speaking and writing through which he was able to

present the Truth in a clear, logical, and appealing manner. He is perhaps best remembered for two notable works addressing the principles of the Truth: *The Great Salvation* and *The World's Redemption*. *The Great Salvation* was written as a proclamation of the Truth to be distributed at "The World's Columbian Exposition" in Chicago in 1893. *The World's Redemption*, released in 1898, presents "the glorious Truths of the Bible" in a most comprehensive and "easily understood" manner.

There are, however, many other publications of Brother Thomas Williams that have served to edify and strengthen us over the years, and we will here briefly review a few of these which have assisted brethren for the past century in rightly dividing



the Word. These are: **Man: His Origin, Nature and Destiny; Hell Torments; The Devil – His Origin and End; Regeneration; Rectification; and Adamic Condemnation.** These publications are available in booklet form through the *Advocate* book store, and may also be found in *Selected Works of Thomas Williams*, published in 1974 by the Richmond Hall Ecclesia.

**Man: His Origin, Nature and Destiny:** In this booklet, Brother Williams in his clear and logical manner demonstrates that man is not in possession of an immortal nature (which would violate and negate God's plan of redemption). What would man need redemption from if he were immortal in nature and did not really die? Brother Williams says, "We have no right to try to revise the Scriptures in this way; we must accept them as they are, and the statement is that the first man is of the earth, earthy, and we must abide by that. So when it is said, *The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*, we must believe it." He shows how theologians state otherwise and how their teachings contradict what the word of God says is the true nature of man, reminding readers of Isaiah's warning, *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them* (Isaiah 8:20). Brother Williams appeals to the word of God in this matter, *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7); and, as Paul proclaimed, *There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body* (1 Corinthians 15:44). Brother Williams goes on to say that the Apostle clearly states in the same chapter that the natural body comes

before the spiritual, demonstrating that Adam's "living soul" and the "natural body" are synonymous.

Brother Williams uses the example of an electric motor brought to "life" by an electric current. The breath of life did the same for Adam in bringing life to his dust-formed body. As Job asserts, *If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust* (34:14-15). Brother Williams clearly demonstrates in this booklet that man is a mortal, sinful creature. Apart from God, he will die and return to the dust. God provided a way of redemption from this state through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, yet it is up to man to change his destiny from that of sin and death to that of life through Jesus Christ.

**Hell Torments a Failure, a Fallacy, and a Fraud:** This booklet is a transcript of a lecture that Brother Williams gave in Toronto in 1906 to an audience of about 5,000. Dare we say in our day it would be possible to attract such a large number of listeners to any of our lectures? Brother Williams had challenged a Dr. Torrey to a debate regarding whether or not there was a fiery hell in which its victims would burn eternally. Dr. Torrey refused to debate Brother Williams. The Christadelphian brethren in Toronto arranged to rent the hall in which Dr. Torrey had previously delivered his talks regarding hell torments for Brother Williams to deliver this talk. Since this is a transcription of what Brother Williams there delivered, we are able to witness some of Brother Williams' style as well as his wit and humor. He beautifully takes Dr. Torrey to task on his concepts of a burning hell; how ridiculous the concept is, and how totally unsupported by Scripture it is. Brother Williams begins by asking where in the Bible is there an account of the creation of hell as there is of the creation of the earth, sea, sky, and the heavens? In several places, the transcriber interjects in parentheses a few remarks that some person in the audience shouts out. Brother Williams calmly goes along with these comments and incorporates them into his lecture. There is applause recorded at several places during the lecture and especially at the end, allowing the reader to witness the audience's approval of what Brother Williams was telling them. Brother Williams covers the pagan origins of hell and how the Catholic Church wove it into her false beliefs. He cites the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words that have been translated hell, demonstrating that the grave is what is meant by these original words. Toward the end, he cites Scriptures that contradict any concept of a burning hell. The transcriber records that there was loud applause at the end.

**The Devil – His Origin and End:** In Brother Williams' beautiful and logical style, he addresses the subject of the devil. First, he cites the two

Greek words that are translated “devil” in our Bible – *diabolos* and *diamon*. The first is used about thirty times and the latter about sixty times in Scripture. These words reflect the superstitions and pagan beliefs that were rampant at the time of Christ. Providing readers with the correct meaning of *diamon* and *diabolos*, Brother Williams reflects upon how ridiculous it is to think that God could create such a being that would have the same powers as Himself. He demonstrates how man misinterprets various Scriptures and applies them to such a creature. He shows the thinking of the flesh in putting the blame for sin away from man and onto a supernatural being. Brother Williams goes into the history of man’s imaginations regarding such a creature, and the Scriptures that the apostate churches have misused in support of this mythical being. His arguments are so logically presented that it is virtually impossible for an intelligent person to believe in a supernatural devil.

**Regeneration:** This booklet is also a transcript of a lecture that Brother Williams delivered, in which he addresses the beliefs promoted by the World’s Parliament of Religions. It is interesting that this “Parliament” began at the World Columbian Exposition that was held in Chicago in 1893. (It was for this Exposition that *The Great Salvation* was written and distributed.) This Parliament of Religions still exists today, and as Brother Williams points out, their motto is, “Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man,” signifying that sinful man needs to return to the Father, styled as “Regeneration.” Brother Williams points out that they fail “to discriminate between generation and regeneration.” He shows that we all “generate” from Adam, and are “by nature the children of wrath.” We are born “aliens,” “strangers,” “without Christ,” “without hope and without God.” This is our natural condition at birth (“generation”). He states, “The work of regeneration is therefore taking out a people for God’s name,” calling the world’s viewpoint of “regeneration” a farce. He logically lays out the nature with which we are born, points out our need for redemption, how it is provided through Christ, and the steps that we need to take (God’s way and not man’s way). Brother Williams describes how we benefit from Christ’s sacrifice; that only the blood of Christ can provide this redemption.

**Rectification:** In this booklet, Brother Williams clearly and with considerable detail expounds on the following questions: “Was man made mortal? What is mortality? What is sinful flesh? What is immortality? What is incorruptibility? Was Jesus mortal? Was Jesus made of sinful flesh? What does baptism do for the believer? When was Jesus immortalized? When will his true brethren be immortalized?” These questions address errors that were surfacing and being promoted in the brotherhood at the time. This booklet is something that we should all read and study as some of these errors are still with us today. Brother Williams addresses these questions through Scripture

and logic. He deals with the illogical conclusions one can come to through false doctrine, such as, Christ did not come in the form of “sinful flesh,” and that Christ himself was not in need of redemption. He deals with some key Scriptures that Brother Roberts had used to uphold the “new light” theory, arriving at the logical conclusion that all of these Scriptures refer to “Adamic condemnation and death.” As to the error of believing that non-covenanted will be raised to the judgment seat of Christ, he says, “All these errors are the result of the theory that resurrection to the judgment seat of Christ is based upon ‘sins of an obnoxious type;’ upon this basis, every miserable sinner of the Gentile world who knows that what he does is wrong, will be raised to judgment with the saints.” In this booklet, he lays out a clear understanding of atonement. Lastly, he deals with the question as to when Jesus was immortalized.

**Adamic Condemnation and the Responsibility Question:** In this last booklet here reviewed, Brother Williams deals with the Unamended understanding of mankind’s responsibility to God and the judgment seat. This is again a transcript of a lecture he delivered at the Christadelphian Hall in Leeds, England. He had written an article in *The Advocate* and the brethren in Leeds and Yorkshire invited him to come and expound on his understanding of “Adamic Condemnation: Its Origin and Nature – Redemption Therefrom, When and How?” There were about forty in attendance, and he did not want this to be a formal lecture, but rather a “heart-to-heart talk.” Throughout his lecture, he clearly lays out Unamended beliefs regarding alienation, citing the Birmingham Statement of Faith and many Scriptures to logically and rightfully divide the Word. He also cites some writings by Brother Roberts to show that at an earlier time Brother Roberts also taught the correct understanding of this subject. Brother Williams shows how the “Declaration,” written by Brother Roberts, had been changed to support the Amended position.

He next deals with the “Responsibility Question” and discusses the “amendment” to the Statement of Faith. Lastly, he deals with some specific Scriptures that he had been asked to explain. He does a beautiful job of clearly elaborating on what these Scriptures actually say, and offers as a partial explanation, “We find that most of the mistakes are made in dealing with words spoken to the Jews...” He says that the Amended erringly apply these verses to all of mankind instead of just the Jews alone.

At the end of this booklet, Brother Williams includes some correspondence between himself, Brother Walker (then editor of *The Christadelphian*), and several other English brethren. He asks, “Where is the blame? – judge ye.” It had come to the point that no reconciliation seemed possible, and although Brother Williams never fully gave up, one can tell that he had become



frustrated with the effort. At the end of this booklet, he asks “Questions for Frank and Fair Answers.” Brother Williams had hoped that these questions would spark some thought and discussion in the Amended community so that they would return to a clear and correct understanding of Scripture.

**The Unamended community owes much to Brother Williams for his efforts and writings on behalf of the Truth. His presentations are presented in a logical and forthright manner, which has led many of us to a clearer understanding of God’s Word and our relationship to Him and to salvation. These publications will never be out-of-date or in need of updating, and we hope that brethren will continue to value, study, and teach the precious truths these booklets contain to the coming generations.**

*Bobby Cox, Canyon Lake, TX*

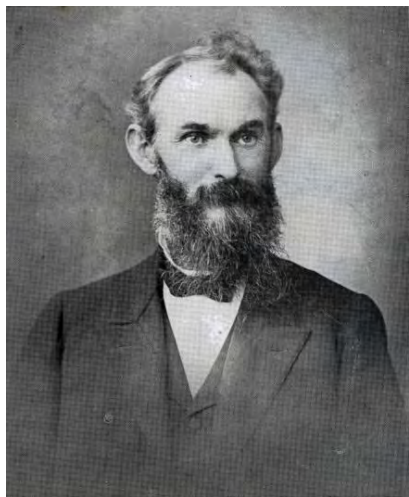


## **In His Own Words**

*In this Special Issue on Brother Thomas Williams, brethren have expounded regarding his life, character, writings, and efforts on behalf of the Truth; all of which have strengthened and enriched our community of believers. In this feature, we thought it prudent to let Brother Williams speak for himself through various snippets from his volume of written works. Brother Williams was a balanced brother, taking uncompromising stands when necessary and moderate stands when called for, and the context within which these quotations are taken is so very important in fully understanding and interpreting what is written. What is clear in regard to Brother Williams’ approach is that there was a warm and genuine affection for the brethren through it all, even with those with whom he differed. Brother Williams worked tirelessly for peace among brethren, and acknowledged from the heart when his adversaries did something right as well as when his supporters did something wrong or unwise. Notably in these few snippets that we are able to present within the confines of the space available, we see his uncompromising positions as well as his moderation; addressing some of the same problems and issues that continue to challenge our community today! We present the following from Brother Williams’ writings as a brief reflection of his teachings, his attitudes, and his uncompromising love for all his brethren. Should any of the quotations elicit concern or questions, we suggest readers look them up and review them within their context.*

*The Christadelphian Advocate Publishing Committee*

**Now, brethren, with all due respect to your complaints and your desire to have no controversy,** we are convinced by scripture, by experience, and



by stubborn facts which force themselves daily before us, that no paper can do its duty in these evil days without controversy, without constantly contending and endeavoring to put down error... "Let us have less controversy and more building up among ourselves." That sounds pleasingly as a suggestion, a proposition; but it will not work; it positively refuses to be reduced to practice. It is self-contradictory, since there cannot be a "building up" without an "earnest contention for the faith once delivered to the saints," and this

"contention" is only another name for "controversy."

We do not complain of the "complaints" received, because they serve a purpose, no doubt. Perhaps if they were not made, we might be more severe, and so perhaps between advice from one side to go on, and the other to stand back, there is an equilibrium. Let me say in conclusion, you deceive yourselves if you think a paper in behalf of the Truth, against existing and constantly arising errors without and within, can be faithfully conducted without controversy.

*(Advocate, "Complaints About Controversy," April 1905, pp. 114-116)*

**There are two dangers confronting us in the sifting which seems to have been taking a fresh start the last year or two.** One is that we are in danger of being frightened from doing our duty ... and the other danger is that in our zeal for what seems to us to be the purity of the truth, and pure fellowship based upon it, we may go farther than the truth permits us to go in this evil age. God is perfect and our ideal formed by what is revealed of Him might sometimes be too high, and therefore impracticable for weak, fallible man in this evil age in which we live. In striving to reach an ideal, we may create a standard too high for the majority of those who are called out ones, and who are expected to find place in the Ecclesia. Evidently the only course to pursue is one that will guide us safely between extremes.

We are not allowed to compromise the fundamental principles of the truth, and yet toleration is absolutely necessary to some extent among those who cannot be expected to reach to the heights that others can who have had longer experience and given closer attention to certain features of the truth. To those who seem to us to be going to the extreme in adding to and

formulating new statements of faith, we would say, Be careful; you may strangle many weak ones for whom Christ died. To those on the other hand who are distressed with the controversies that have arisen from time to time, and are urging these as a reason for throwing the doors wide open, as it were, in the matter of the basis of fellowship we would say, Beware; for you may compromise principles of truth, and thus become contaminated as the ecclesias were to whom the seven epistles were written... While it is our duty to reprove, rebuke, and to exhort, we must not make a hobby of any principle of truth to the extent of using it as a means to exclude from our fellowship those who sometimes become weak, and falter, and are ready to fall... When the time comes to adjust these things, a righteous judge will be able to take the circumstances into consideration and make all allowances the various cases call for...

But what about the estrangement between brethren by the late controversy? So far as the editor of the ADVOCATE is concerned, while he regrets the conduct of some, he has nothing but good wishes for the temporal and eternal wellbeing of those with whom he has failed to agree. He would like to remove all causes of estrangement in all cases before the Master come, and will always be ready to go more than half way to effect it, but if the way is not open and it must remain till righted by Him who will straighten all crooked things, he will not be as much concerned about who will be vindicated as he will be anxious that we may all be saved. This is the desire of his heart, and it is an easy matter with him to forget and forgive.

*(Advocate, Editorial, May 1897, p. 154)*

**There seems to be a tendency towards a repudiation of Statements of Faith**, and a disposition to ecclesiastically take the ground that it is better to accept “the Bible and the Bible alone,” leaving each ecclesia to determine for itself as to whether or not individuals accept the Bible in the true light and are thereby acceptable for fellowship...the experience the brotherhood have passed through with Statements, made, re-made, “amended” and “amplified” is responsible for the objections urged against them. The One Faith, which will save, will save “babes” in Christ as well as adults; and it is simple enough for fishermen, farmers, mechanics and all classes of hard working sons of toil, most of whom know but little about polemics, and finely drawn lines of logic that would split a hair into a thousand parts. The gospel of salvation having been designed for men of this class and not for “many wise men after the flesh” must be understood as being adapted to the capacities of such. Hence a statement of the faith ought to be a simple, easy-to-be-understood thing.

*(Advocate, Editorial, May and June, 1900, page 215)*

**The brethren in America have succeeded in keeping these troubles from their shores... At present most of them stand firmly on the old foundation occupied for forty years, and I believe this is the wise and only safe position to-day, a position which, to be brief, I would call “The Old Birmingham Statement of Faith and Basis of Fellowship.”** While some refuse to formally accept any “Statement” except the Bible, it is agreed that the “Statement” referred to gives expression to a position clear enough, broad enough, and narrow enough for the present practical workings of the Truth.

*(Advocate, “A Rallying Point,” October 1900, page 332)*

**Now if those who profess to be the brethren of Christ would be satisfied to let well alone, there would not be the causes of trouble that often arise.** The trouble is that frequently one brother becomes dissatisfied with another... or becomes angry because the workings of things in the body do not just suit his idea of things, and he begins to institute a little “Inquisition” of his own to try and discover some means of getting rid of the object or objects of his jealousy and envy. He searches the Statement of Faith and finds he cannot get any cause of accusation from a comparison of the brother’s belief with it; nothing can be laid to his charge morally, and for a time he is in a strait to know what can be done. At last, he strikes a happy thought; he thinks to himself, There is one point upon which that brother differs with Doctor Thomas, and possibly one or two other prominent brethren. That point ought to be made a test of. A test is made of it until the brethren are tormented with the discussion of a little crotchet that an envious spirit has magnified into a mountain for the purpose of carrying out the designs of an evil heart. This was how it was in the days of the apostles, and human nature is capable of being just as evil to-day as it was in those days.

In making tests of fellowship we are safe in going so far and no farther. The things that go to make up the “first principles” having been decided upon, and worded in such a form that no mistake need be made. Let the question be: is there oneness of mind upon these? If so, while we try to “go on unto perfection,” let us not distract and rend the body in pieces by forcing in crotchets, or even by making a difference of belief upon minor matter a test of fellowship... Now, this is not a plea, by any means, for “broadening the lines:” but it is a plea for keeping them in their well-defined place...

*(Advocate, “One is Your Master, Even Christ: and Ye are all Brethren,” June 1888, page 161)*

**With regard to possible resurrections in the future, as a “third class,” outside of the law of the resurrection,** let all admit the possibility of it as a matter of God’s prerogative, and taking our stand there, we shall have a

point upon which we can agree ... Admit the inappropriateness of the Gentiles coming with the household, who are not of the household, and not in covenant relationship, and we will admit with you the “maybe.” And surely a maybe is not a thing to quarrel about, is it? Certainly not. There is our meeting point, and that is where we ought to have remained at the time when this controversy arose. And why did we not stand there? I will tell you. The reason we are not there now is because of this, the Statement of Faith has been tampered with...

(*Advocate*, “Burning Questions,” December 1907, page 365)

**We are leaving 1895 in the past, in many respects a sorrowful past.** It seems to us that some things are being left crooked that might be made straight if the true spirit of Christ were allowed the sway it is entitled to. It is the duty of every brother with every brother, and every “party” with every party, to at least try, yes, try and try again to right all wrongs and mutually endeavor “to gain thy brother.” Likes or dislikes, friend or foe have no right to stand in the way of doing this duty. And since we are about to enter a year fraught with tremendous possibilities, “what manner of persons ought we to be” in this respect? Have we a brother or sister from whom we are estranged? Then let us go and try at least to be reconciled. If a brother or a sister, or a party either, refuse to be reconciled we cannot help it; we cannot but grieve and wait; but we shall have done our duty, and shall be better prepared to wait for the great day of trial. “Gain thy brother” is, we fear, an injunction often subjected to whims and ways of the flesh rather than given the attention it so richly deserves.

(*Advocate*, Editorial, December 1895, page 281)

## **A Plea for Action...Looking Towards Union and Unity**

**By Brother Thomas Williams**

### **To the Christadelphians throughout the World**

Beloved in the Lord: I address you individually and collectively as fellow-sojourners in the world’s wilderness. I address you as one who is in the bonds of the same covenant that you are in, and whose law is the same, whose obligations are the same, and whose hope is the same....

Do not say, “Let it go to the judgment seat.” It will go there, of course, but it is our duty to try, try, and try again to right all wrongs in which we may be involved before we are called to the judgment seat. This letter shall be a witness of my endeavor in that direction. I send it to you as such. I dedicate it to the great cause of eternal truth as such. Will you take hold of the matter with me and try to straighten out the crooked things that are troubling and dividing the one body? ... Now what do you say? ...

(*The Advocate*, April 1902, “A Plea for Action,” page 94)

## Notes from the Editor's Tours

It was Brother Williams' custom, as editor of *The Advocate*, to give an account of his "tours," as they were termed, to provide a report on the welfare of the ecclesias and brethren. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, intercity travel was not commonplace. The main mode of travel was by passenger train over the vast rail network that had been built over the last half of the nineteenth century. Brother Williams travelled tens of thousands of miles by train to visit ecclesias in Virginia, Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Florida, Kentucky, New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Texas, California and Ontario.

**Brother Williams explains what it was like to travel by train:** "Taking the train on the Baltimore and Ohio railway at 3:30 p.m. June the 24<sup>th</sup>, we are off for Washington, D.C. The weather is hot, the road is dusty, and the train, whirling around mountains and through tunnels, is smoky, and by the time we arrived in Washington we partook of a large share of the smoke and the dust, with a considerable whirling sensation clinging to us."<sup>1</sup>

This was Brother Williams' first visit to the Norfolk ecclesia and first meeting with the brethren there, and he was given only a description that he was to look for a "stout, heavy-set man," with instruction from his host to, "See if you can pick him out." "This was Brother R. C. Henley. As the boat hove to, we fixed our eyes upon a man we felt sure was brother Henley, and we did not have to change our mind – he was the very man; and with him was Brother B. F. Dozier, both receiving us with heartiness and brotherly familiarity, which to a stranger would have appeared as evidence of long, personal acquaintance. But what can a stranger know of the ties that bind God's children in the bond of love?"<sup>2</sup> **Many brother and sisters can relate to the experience of meeting fellow-believers for the first time and finding an instant bond of friendship in the Truth.**

After giving six public lectures in Norfolk, on Saturday almost the whole ecclesia took the train twenty miles to Virginia Beach. "At that time the news was coming from Chicago and other parts in the North of the intense heat, from which some were dying and others prostrated. But here on this beach we were enjoying the cool winds of the Atlantic Ocean...part of the time was spent in reading the Scriptures and in asking and answering questions, and the day was made one of profit as well as pleasure. All returned home in time for the meeting that night."<sup>3</sup> **How many Christadelphian excursions to the beach in the modern age would set time aside to read and discuss the Scriptures and give priority to returning in time for the evening meeting?**

The following year in late July, 1898, Brother and Sister Williams travelled by train to Henderson, Kentucky. They arrived in the evening and “the next morning we are aroused before six o’clock to prepare for a ride of about nine miles out to the Barrens, where I am advertised to give a lecture on the present condition of the world in its relation to the return of Christ. Brother and Sister Pruitt called for us and conveyed us safely. The meeting house was filled to overflowing, and to enable those outside to hear, the windows were opened and carriages were pulled up close to the building and in these the people sat and seemed to be as comfortable as those inside the building, and it was thought they could hear what was said. Some of the people had come long distances in the country and some were from the city of Henderson; among the latter some of the sons of Israel who had, several years since, taken such interest in what they had heard us set forth as to place their temple, in the city of Henderson, at our disposal for several lectures.”<sup>4</sup> **This account provides an example of the strenuous schedule that Brother Williams maintained; of the generous hospitality of the brethren; the interest in the Truth among the rural populace; and is the only time of which we are aware that he had direct contact with a Jewish synagogue.**

When Brother Williams finished his last session in the Hall-Williams debate at Creal Springs, Illinois, at 4 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon (August, 1898), he was looking forward to a day’s respite before leaving for Norfolk, Virginia on Tuesday. Early the next morning, he received a telegram at the home of his host, Brother W. S. Cocke, “that Addie, our son Gershom’s wife, was dangerously ill, and asking us to come... We were helpless, perplexed and distressed, knowing that our boy would be heartbroken, and fearing we might never again see poor, dear Addie, a sweet and gentle girl, between whom and our boy there was the most tender love.” Brother and Sister Williams deliberated over what they should do and with regret decided to forego travelling to Rothville, Missouri where his son and his wife lived and stay with the original plan to travel to Norfolk. “So we telegraphed and we wrote and then very early Tuesday morning we sorrowfully went our weary way towards Norfolk, Virginia. The weather was extremely hot, the trains were crowded, the dust was flying, and the hot gas and smoke blowing through the open windows of the cars. Thirty-six hours of this lay ahead of us, and still we wondered what news (about Addie) would await us upon our arrival.”<sup>5</sup> When they arrived in Norfolk, a telegram informed them “Addie died at 7 P.M.” Brother Williams expressed that he and Sister Williams needed time to bear their grief: “Let the curtain drop a little while.” **When Brother Williams wrote about the mortality of man, it was not some remote thing – the sting of death touched his own family at a young age (Gershom was then in his mid-twenties).**

Partly in order to seek to quell the disruption of harmony that had broken out over the responsibility question in New England, Brother Williams travelled to Massachusetts and ministered to the brethren there in seven ecclesias: Lowell, Lawrence, Campello, Taunton, Providence, Worcester and Quincy. He left Chicago on the morning of February 8<sup>th</sup> and arrived in Worcester, Massachusetts the following afternoon, a distance of 991 miles. There was considerable dissension among some of the Massachusetts ecclesias over the responsibility question, and certain brethren in the Boston Ecclesia were remaining aloof from Brother Williams. Brother Williams relates an encounter he had with one of the young dissenters: "The first one we met of this party was a young lad who, at the close of one of the lectures, abruptly asked us in a sort of mechanical way, 'Would you fellowship brother Andrew?' From his very tone and impolite manner it was evident he was asking a question he knew but little about. What could we say to such a question put in such a manner? Was it a case to be treated with pity or with contempt? Perhaps a few questions to the lad would have opened his eyes to see how little he knew about the brother his impertinence so glibly inquired about. But we were in no mood for conversation and did not deem it a duty to respond at length to a question from a boy as to whether we were 'of Paul or of Apollos.' A quick answer and be done was all patience and respect demanded. So we answered, 'Ask not if I will fellowship this *man* or that; ask me what doctrine of what statement of the one faith I will fellowship and I will answer.' And I always will, even if the question is impolitely put by a lad, who may yet learn good manners."<sup>6</sup> **Brother Williams handled this brash young man with fatherly wisdom.**

Brother William despised the political methods of certain brethren in the Boston ecclesia which had passed a resolution that the seven surrounding ecclesias "would be fellowshipped up to a given date but when the clock struck the beginning of that day the guillotine would drop, and hundreds of heads would fall into the basket of excommunication."<sup>7</sup> Brother Williams was pleased that "a goodly number came from Boston" to a public lecture he gave in Quincy, noting that "more than ever the warm-heartedness of olden times was manifested by the visitors from the Boston ecclesia... At the close of the lecture, the handshaking we received was refreshing and encouraging. Brethren Rileigh, McKellar, and Fairbrother evidently thought something might be done to reach a better state of things and asked if I could arrange for a brotherly interview in Boston. Yes I will go a long way out of my route to do so...the following Monday night was free. If that will suit, write me and I will be there. Agreed, and we parted in hope...Brother Rileigh wrote us from Boston that the proposal at the meeting of managing brethren for a brotherly interview had met with opposition from some, and others thought it better not to press the matter for the present."<sup>8</sup> **This account shows that**



**the need for control by certain strong willed brethren has often led to setbacks among brethren who might otherwise be reconciled. What is commendable about Brother Williams' attitude was his willingness to go the extra mile literally to meet with brethren to resolve differences in understanding and to engage with them face to face with an open Bible.**

Did Brother Williams ever meet Brother John Thomas? Yes. "Now I was present (in 1869) when the Doctor gave his lecture, 'The Book Unsealed,' from the charts, in Mumbles, South Wales, and Brother Roberts took it in short-hand."<sup>9</sup> Brother Williams was twenty-two years old at the time and he carried the memory of the talk with him for the rest of his life. "We have met Dr. Thomas personally, followed him from place to place to drink in the beautiful words of truth his masterly lectures presented, read his works for thirty years and been heartily thankful for the great work he did in digging the Truth out of the rubbish of the apostasy; and because there are a few things we cannot agree with him on we do not propose to be made to appear as an enemy by any man."<sup>10</sup> **Brother Williams did not feel obligated to follow Brother Thomas where he determined that the Scriptures could not support it. He was not beholden to any man, but to the word of God.**

One of the family factors that connected the Williams family to Ontario was the fact that their son William ("Willie") married a sister (Sister Alice Cole) in the Doon, Ontario ecclesia and settled in the nearby town of Berlin. (During the First World War, the name of the town was changed to Kitchener and has long since absorbed the village of Doon). As a result, Brother and Sister Williams had a special tie to the Doon ecclesia and often visited there so that they could visit with their son and daughter-in-law. We do not know what became of the younger Brother and Sister Williams. According to information from a non-Christadelphian branch of the writer's family, in the process of time they came not to have a good report among them that are without, thus bringing a measure of contempt on the Christadelphians. **None of the sons of leading brethren in the nineteenth century (Brothers Robert Roberts; Thomas Williams; J. J. Andrew) seem to have developed in the Truth, thus preventing any kind of dynastic transfer of responsibilities within families.**

In the Kitchener area there are two major roads that have Christadelphian connections. Homer Watson Boulevard was named after a local artist whose wife was a Christadelphian and whose studio was visited by Brother Williams.<sup>11</sup> Trussler Road bears the name of a local Christadelphian family that were members of the Doon ecclesia.<sup>12</sup> Some members of the family had left the farm country around Doon and settled in a frontier town called Trout Creek in Parry Sound District about 150 miles north of Toronto. On the occasion of his tour to Ontario in the winter of 1901, Brother Williams made

the trip by rail to Trout Creek accompanied by Brother David Tolton of Guelph. Brother Williams had spent part of his early life in Iowa working for a lumber yard. He might therefore have been particularly interested in the Trussler family ‘Lumber Camp’ operation in Trout Creek. **Brother Williams travelled into remote areas under rugged conditions in the depth of winter in order to declare the Truth.**

There was a small ecclesia in Niagara Falls where two generations of the Cole family (brother in the flesh to Brother Cole of the Doon ecclesia) and the Smith and Habgood families lived. Brother Williams was a guest in the Coles’ home and, as partakers of their hospitality, extensively toured the falls themselves. On the occasion of one visit to Brother Cole’s home, he remarked that although the home was less than two miles distant from the precipice of the Falls, and everyone else could hear the roar of the water, he could not hear a thing until he was much closer to the falls. He referred to this hearing impairment as his “thorn in the flesh” and, in later years, used an ear trumpet in order to better carry on conversations. One wonders if the



hearing loss was caused in part by occupational hazards at earlier stages of his life; first in working in sawmills, and later in a printing operation where there would have been the constant pounding of the presses.

**Brother Williams did not prepare notes for his talks, and any records of his addresses were provided by shorthand note-takers.** He had a remarkable grasp of the Bible and familiarity with its passages allowing him to organize his thoughts and find his references with facility. He was forward, using the public speaking platform that was the characteristic tool of his age, reaching out to a perishing world with the message of the Gospel. In the scope and energy with which he undertook what brethren today call “outreach,” he puts us all to shame. What we admire about Brother Williams most, from this distance in time, was his intensive labour for the Truth, often in difficult and trying physical and spiritual circumstances; and for the exemplary attitude with which he carried on the work; humble, earnest and without a political motive. It is known only to God how many brothers and sisters there are in the earth today because of his work, but we can be sure that the answer is “not a few.”

*James Farrar, Grimsby, Ontario*

<sup>1</sup>Editor’s Tour South, *Christadelphian Advocate*, September, 1897, p. 263

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 264

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 266

<sup>4</sup>Editor's Tour South, *The Christadelphian Advocate*, September, 1898, p. 264-265

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 271-272

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 206

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 207

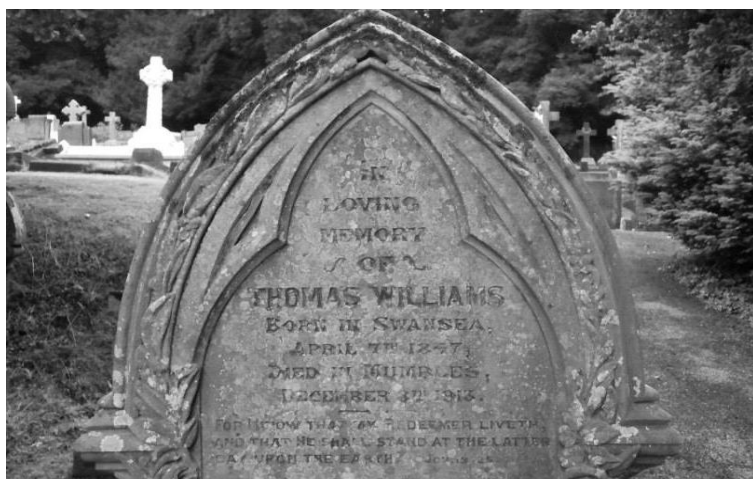
<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 207, 208, 210

<sup>9</sup>*Supplement to the Christadelphian Advocate* for February, 1900, The Chicago Ecclesia to the Christadelphians Throughout the World In Self-Defense, p. 78

<sup>10</sup>Retraction From What?, *The Christadelphian Advocate*, November, 1898, p. 330

<sup>11</sup>Editor's Tour East, *The Christadelphian Advocate*, June, 1898, p. 202

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 203



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