

## Explanatory statement

In June 1979 I had a conversation, for many hours, with a faithful servant of the Lord, our brother F.A. Hughes, now 92 years old (but still very clear) and the nestor of the British brethren with whom we are in fellowship. Bro. Hughes has been in fellowship with the Taylor brethren, or London brethren, so-called, until 1949. He had a very prominent position in this circle, until the Lord opened his eyes to the corrupt condition of the Taylor fellowship. He left it, and after some years was received by the Glanton brethren, so-called, when it was evident that he was entirely clear on matters like the eternal Sonship of Christ. Since the reunion in 1974 we are in fellowship with the Glanton brethren and thereby with bro. Hughes. He has become known amongst us by several books, like the one on "The Lord's Supper"; until recently he was the editor of the magazine "Precious Things".

Bro. Hughes told me much about his many contacts with bro. C.A. Coates whom he has known very closely for a long time. He told me that C.A.C. at the end of his life not only deeply regretted his utterings on the Sonship of Christ but also agreed that John 17, among other Scriptures, proves this eternal Sonship beyond doubt. I then asked bro. Hughes to send me a brief written statement about his contacts with C.A.C., which he did (see the copy enclosed). It may be of interest to quote here from a letter written by G.A. Lucas (another brother who left the Taylor fellowship in the early fifties) to A.B.T., Febr. 7, 1964 (not published):

"...While these developments were taking place from 1938 onwards, poor C.A.C. became increasingly distressed. He was over 80 years of age, suffering severely from gastric ulcer and severe migraine, and was too weak to enter into public conflict for the truth. There is no documentary evidence available to prove his later convictions because he only disclosed them verbally to trusted friends. From these conversations it seems clear that he wrote J.T. personally, who refused to answer him. Just before he died he again wrote J.T., who was then in this country [England], imploring him to come and see him, but his letter was again ignored. It was at this time that he expressed his deep regrets to some close friends that he had ever allowed himself to be involved in the 'Sonship' controversy. (...) J.T. and his wife, who were in this country when C.A.C. died, were invited to be at his burial, but did not come. When someone asked Mrs. J.T. why, she replied that it would have meant missing a meeting!"

I lay these things before my brethren. I personally have been greatly blessed by C.A.C.'s writings but, as far as I remember, never recommended them to anybody. Although I feel they belong to the most valuable ministry ever written by Brethren so-called and although, besides in his booklets and letters on the Sonship of Christ, I do not remember to have ever come across any fundamental error, I deeply regret that C.A.C. never openly repudiated his error on eternal Sonship. On the other hand, I take from the Lord my privileged encounter with bro. Hughes, from whom I received this unequivocal testimony about C.A.C.'s later restoration. By the way, as far as can be ascertained, by far the most of his written ministry was written before 1930, the time he was 'intrigued into his error by J.T. and P.L.

I had the joy of knowing Mr. O.A. Coates over a period of many years. He was a quiet unassuming man in whom the precious features of Christ were plainly manifested. He was humble, gentle, content to be as His Master. I know him in meetings in which he himself served and his self-effacement was apparent to all. I knew him in meetings where I was privileged to serve including his home town of Teignmouth in Devon, and in such meetings his happy and spiritual support was a joy of unusual quality. I visited him too in his home, a small unpretentious house called "Melita", and his whole conversation reflected his deep devotion to the interests of His Lord and also of His people, especially the young. He did not move around much, he was not a physically strong man, but his written ministry has endeared the Saviour to many many saints of God.

As to the question of the Lord's Sonship he remarked on the sadness of men arguing (sometimes bitterly) on such a delicate and precious subject, and he agreed with me that John chapter 17 v.24-26 settled beyond doubt the question of the Son's eternal relationship with the Father.

He was under immense pressure regarding this question from men like Mr. P. Lyon and others and I have every reason to believe that he bitterly regretted any lapse on his part regarding this truth.

I believe that some knowledge of his regret reached those who had opposed him and this probably led to the following incident. When the Lord took dear Mr. O.A. Coates home Mr. James Taylor Senior was offered transport to our dear brother's burial - but he refused to go. When asked in a brother's house why he did not go - he remained quiet for a moment or two, and then pointing upwards said - "You will all be put right up there".

I do not hesitate to say that I believe Mr. O.A. Coates was one of the choicest of saints and of the Lord's servants in our generation. His writings reflect the glory of his Lord in no uncertain way, and to set them aside without careful consideration, and attention to their outstanding facts must result in great spiritual loss.

F.A. HUGHES.