

The Reply to

"MADE A CURSE FOR US"

("The Christadelphian", December 1946)

Like the preceding article this effort is designed to justify the assertions made by certain Christadelphians that the first act of disobedience changed the flesh of Adam and Eve from the original "very good" of its creation into the "wholly evil flesh" which it is now supposed to be and that the purpose of the Crucifixion was to be a public exhibition of how vile it is in God's sight and fit only for destruction.

The author's purpose is to prove that being of supposed sinful flesh, Jesus was by nature condemned by the Law and therefore under God's curse, and that His death upon the Cross was the execution of that curse.

As with the previous article, we shall prove quite simply that the whole argument is based upon a false theory and is a misapplication of Scripture and, as such, it is a worthless and misleading contribution.

Section (a) begins: "Through descent from Adam both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin" (Romans 3:9). Now we instantly agree that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, but why does Mr Barling add the words "Through descent from Adam"? Paul does not say so; Paul says nothing whatever about physical descent, and the reason the writer inserts it is because at the back of his mind he has Clause 5 of the Statement of Faith, viz., "A sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being and was transmitted to all his posterity." This clause is unscriptural rubbish traceable to the same source, though from an earlier period, as the Immortality of the Soul. It is, if anything, a worse and more destructive heresy.

In Romans 3 Paul is speaking of Law not of physical descent; if he was speaking of physical descent then the Jews had no advantage, for both Jews and Gentiles are the same flesh, be it sinful or otherwise. But Paul's purpose was to show how Law operates. How was God to judge the world? (v. 6). It was to do with those who were under the Law (v. 19). "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (v. 20). "Yea, we establish the law." (v. 31).

How are we to understand Paul then when he says "all are under sin"? He is referring to the Edenic Law of Sin and Death which was incorporated in the Mosaic Law and which required a recognition of the fact that the sentence incurred in Eden was the forfeiture of life because of sin. The only grain of truth in Mr Barling's mixture is that our physical relationship to Adam does enter into the matter, but in a quite different way. The life of every individual man and woman is derived from Adam by physical descent and therefore is entailed or in pledge, sold or forfeited. But as in every other instance of an article being sold or forfeited, it is not the nature or the quality of the article which is changed, but the ownership; in other words it is a matter of Law or possession.

This is what is meant by the statement that "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin." (Romans 11:32). For a fuller treatment of this principle and its purpose the reader is referred to "My Life for The Sheep" (page 4 para.2), and also, for a concise statement of the responsibility of the individual to the Law or Laws appertaining to the age in which he lives,

to Dr Thomas' summary quoted earlier in this booklet. Once grasp the principle that it is the Law which reigns, not “physical sin,” “defiled nature” or “evil flesh,” etc., and the loving kindness, mercy and justice of God can be seen in its true beauty.

It would baffle the cleverest apologist to reconcile the conception of a loving God with One who not only punished Adam for disobedience but also punishes every individual born of the will of the flesh, including Jesus who was not so born, for the same act of disobedience. The idea is an absolute contradiction of every standard of justice and also of the clearly defined Scriptural principles of Deuteronomy 24:16, and Ezekiel 18:20.

Mr Barling continues: “Escape from death is therefore a need common to both, for death passed upon all men.” Here the writer reverses the process by which he makes Scripture agree with his preconceived idea. In the first text quoted he added a clause which is not there; here he omits a clause which is. This kind of double dealing is inexcusable. He produces this fragment of text (from Romans 5:12) in proof of his contention that it is through descent from Adam that all are under sin, but Paul gives an entirely different reason, saying “Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” It would be interesting to be told why it is necessary to omit part of what Paul says in Romans 5:12 and add something he does not say in Romans 3:9. If the Christadelphian theory necessitates chopping and changing Scripture in this manner it is surely high time to clean it up!

Here is the explanation and it is amazingly simple when it is remembered that it is Divine Laws with which we are concerned and not with Laws of nature. Jews and Gentiles, wise and ignorant, good and bad alike, are all under the Law of Sin, but no man is accountable to that Law until he is aware of its existence. Hence Paul qualifies his general statements with the restrictions, “But sin is not imputed where there is no Law” and “where there is no Law there is no sin.” It is convenient to ignore these when one is trying to prove, as per Statement of Faith, that it is natural corruption which is the wages of sin, but it is wisest neither to add nor to take away from God's word when one is seeking to arrive at an understanding of His purpose. (Revelation 22:18,19).

We challenge Mr Barling or anyone else to produce a passage of Scripture where natural death is stated to be a consequence of Adam's sin.

No one who dies a natural death or even an untimely death from accident or disease, fears that it is a bar to eternal life if he is in Jesus Christ. He did not die to prevent us from dying but to save us from the sin, or out of the Law of Sin and Death which, typified by the expulsion from Eden and the barred way to the tree of life, excludes all under it from the hope of Eternal Life. Those who pass their natural life in ignorance of its operation perish without Law, while those who knowingly remain under it, thereby rejecting God's gracious offer of redemption, will be raised to reap the wages of sin and perish by Law. Verse 14 distinctly states that some “had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.” Adam became a sinner by actual transgression of one specific Law, but the condemnation, judgment or sentence of Law made many sinners in the sense that they are born legally in bondage to sin and related to the Death for Sin. Similarly, by the obedience of Jesus Christ, many can be made righteous, released from bondage and receive justification of life.

The writer goes on to say: “The Jew... was also made subject to a curse which did not concern the Gentile.” How can a man write such futile statements? Anyone knows that the Law of Moses applied only to Jews and did not concern Gentiles, for the simple reason that

the Jews were the chosen people and were thus in a special relationship. But the absurd thing is that he tries to prove that because the Jews were under the Law, they were therefore cursed in a way Gentiles were not.

The Law provided for both blessings and curses. Those who were obedient and kept it were blessed; those only who were disobedient were cursed. And even for those who broke the Law and deserved to be cursed there was provision for obtaining forgiveness so that they need not suffer the penalty. The Jews had this advantage over the Gentiles that nationally they were in a renewed Covenant relationship with God, while Gentiles were still in Edenic alienation which they could only remove by becoming naturalized Jews. Thus it was easier for Jews to obtain salvation - they were by birth nearer to God - beloved for their father Abraham's sake. But this advantage also carried with it responsibilities; they were both nationally and individually accountable, whereas Gentiles were not. The Jews lost this initial advantage by their national failures, so that their kingdom was ended and its Law superseded, and now they can only obtain reconciliation on what have proved, for them, much more difficult terms.

Mr Barling next affirms: "As long as the Law remained operative, so did the curse for there was none capable of perfect obedience to it, no, not one." We answer this from his own statement made twelve lines previously; "Jesus was wholly obedient." Was Jesus a Jew? Was He under the Law? Was He capable of perfect obedience? He further states, and with no more foundation: "All Jews, except He (Jesus), were cursed by the Mosaic Law." Leaving aside the fact that even he has to recognize one exception and thus destroys his whole argument, it would be interesting to know how Caleb and Joshua (to cite only two of a considerable number) were cursed, as we are told "They have wholly followed the Lord."

He then proceeds to argue that since no one could obey the Law, its curse could only be removed by abolishing it. As we have previously shown, the failure to obtain life via the Law was not because they could not keep it, but because they sought it not by faith in what the Law exemplified but (merely) by the (ceremonial) works of the Law. They calculated the tithes of their smallest herbs but they neglected the weightier matters of the Law.

Two simple and indisputable facts destroy his whole case: (1) Jesus kept the Law perfectly; (2) many Jews obtained a title to life under the Law.

In section (b) "The curse of hanging," Mr Barling makes the assertion: "To remove the curse He had first to come under it;" and goes on to argue that in suffering Himself to be crucified Jesus "innocently" broke the Law and was therefore cursed by it and put to death in execution of the curse.

It is beyond understanding how anyone could break a Law by keeping it, or how death could be at the same time both the suffering of the penalty of the Law and the breach of Law by which that penalty was incurred. We have learned, however, not to expect much in the way of logic or consistency from this writer. His initial fallacy is the assertion that Jesus could only remove the curse by coming under it. Neither Scripture nor any other evidence supports it; on the contrary, sense and reason rebel against the suggestion that only One who was Himself cursed by the Law could redeem others who were also cursed by the Law. The reverse is what we should naturally expect and this is, in fact, what Scripture states. "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world" (John 10:36) that He was cursed by the Law which the Father institutes? Jesus was Himself free from the curse of the

Law because He kept it both in spirit and letter, but He bore the curse in the stead and for the sake of His nation who had incurred it by disobedience and unbelief.

It is quite true, as Mr Barling says, that “he that is hanged is cursed of God,” but the hanging was not in itself a breach of Law but simply the public demonstration of the fact that the criminal whose carcass was hung up had committed a sin by which he had incurred the curse of God and had duly paid the penalty. One who committed a sin worthy of death and was stoned and his body hanged was accursed of God, but one who was put to death unjustly and innocently was cursed neither by the Law nor by God.

When Jesus was “made a curse for us” it was purely and solely in the sense that He suffered the curse that was due to those who had broken God’s Law.

The purpose of Paul in quoting “He that is hanged is cursed of God” was not to suggest that because Jesus was hanged therefore He must have been cursed by God, but to prove that those to whom the hanging was justly due were cursed by God.

It was the very fact that Jesus was innocent and free from all curse or condemnation which enabled Him, by suffering as their sacrifice and substitute, to bear it for them. Being born “under the Law,” as Jesus truly was, is quite a different thing from being under the curse of the Law. He has wandered from the truth by confusing the Law itself, as a code to be obeyed in the spirit of faith, with the curses which applied only to those who broke it presumptuously.

In conclusion; what was the purpose of Law? Note what Paul says in Romans 5:20:

“The Law entered that the offence might abound.” This can only be the Edenic offence, the sin of the world. The Israelites were brought face to face with the first act of disobedience and by the enactments of the Law made to realise more fully and completely the hopeless position into which sin had delivered them. Their history was one long typical, allegorical lesson; in their Law was the form and knowledge of the Truth; it was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ and the one essential factor in its observance was that God was to be magnified and His way honoured. The offerings of the blood of animals, the redemptive shekel, the Passover, the Day of Atonement, the Jubilee, were each types and reminders of the Adamic condemnation and the means of reconciliation upon God's own conditions. To see in it no more than a code of behaviour and meaningless ceremonial which it was impossible to keep, hung by God like a millstone around the necks of His helpless children for the express purpose of putting them under a curse, is the same kind of insanity as to see in the Law of Eden a physical principle of sin in the flesh by which man is defiled and corrupted.

The Law of itself was holy, just and good, and ordained unto life, but by their fanatical worship of the letter and blindness to the Spirit, the Jewish scholars made it a burden grievous to be born. Mr Barling and his associates, by their crazy infatuation with the unscriptural theories handed down to them are making equally foolish mistakes of a similar kind, thereby rendering the Word of God of none effect.

We can only implore the reader “by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ” to renounce the superstition of original sin, inherited sin, sinful flesh and a cursed Son of God and turn to the pure light of the Truth. “Come ye out from amongst them and be ye separate, saith the Lord,

and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17). The farce of apostate “excommunication” now labelled “disfellowship” can never separate you from the love of Christ nor from His table. Rid yourself of the delusion that men with their “Statements of Faith” can dictate your spiritual walk towards the Kingdom. Search for yourself - seek and ye shall find, and with the Revealing Light kindle a flame that will purify your heart and mind and consume the God dishonouring doctrine of “wholly evil flesh” that defiles the Son of God, curses Him and makes His loving sacrifice a polluted offering.

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SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS OF THE NAZARENE FELLOWSHIP ON THE ATONEMENT.

The one sin of Adam, for which he alone was responsible, was The Sin (singular) of the world. (John 1, 29). By it he forfeited his natural life and relationship to God. If Adam had been put to death the present race would never have existed.

The animal/s slain in Eden were typical of The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13. 8), and they had a double significance. By those sacrifices Adam's life was spared and he restored to his former relationship, and we all had a natural existence and also the hope of the same relationship through the redemptive work of God in Christ Jesus.

Adam was the first to benefit from Christ's sacrifice. One Man lost his life by One Sin; and One Man (Jesus Christ) gave His life in the stead of His brother. (See “My Life for the Sheep” (p. 4) on The Federal Principle).

When we read of “Remission of Sins that are past” (Romans 3:25) or of “The transgressions that were under the first Covenant” (Hebrews 9. 15), or that it was expedient “That one man should die for the people” (John 18:14), or “for that nation” (John 11:51), these are only different phases of the same fact stated by Paul, “Christ died for our sins (plural) according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3), or by John, “For the sins of the whole world” (1 John. 2:2).

Thus, the one individual sin of Adam, the federal imputation of sin per Law which hangs over the whole race, the personal sins committed both before and under the Law of Moses and sins of individuals in Christ after baptism, are all involved and covered by THE SIN OF THE WORLD for which Christ died, and none must be either overlooked or unduly emphasized at the expense of the rest.

