

Was Jesus The Son of Adam?

In his letter H.C.Gates explains his objections to one aspect of Nazarene Fellowship belief which he has sent for our consideration. This is followed by a reply by Ernest Brady.

H.C.Gates writes:-

“Is it true that Jesus was not legally a son of Adam and thereby free from any condemnation?”

It is argued by Christadelphians that all men are under condemnation of death as a result of descent from Adam. This is styled “Adamic condemnation.” This gives rise to the question whether Jesus was under this condemnation. The usual Christadelphian view is that Jesus was condemned and had to die for himself as a result. Others, objecting to this idea of Jesus dying for himself say he was not under condemnation.

To remove Jesus from “Adamic condemnation” it is argued that he was not legally a son of Adam (for God was his Father). This view does not exempt Jesus from the possession of a nature the same as all descendants of Adam, for this he inherited from his mother. But what are the facts? Was Jesus a son of Adam or not? In answer we have to point out that Jesus is often called “son of man,” a title which is stated so often as if to emphasise that he was in fact “son of Adam” for surely “man” and “Adam” are interchangeable terms. “This receives confirmation in the genealogy of Luke 3 where Jesus is shown to be without doubt the son of Adam. The genealogy ends with the words “which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.” The objection might be raised that this genealogy is on Mary’s side. Certainly it is, but it is surely included in the inspired word to show us clearly that Jesus was, in fact, reckoned to be the son of Adam. We find no suggestion that Jesus escaped “legal” descent from Adam by not having a human father.

The real truth about the freedom of Jesus from condemnation is seen when the question is pursued as to what constituted him the redeemer. It is rightly argued that a redeemer must be one who is outside the scope of condemnation himself but this condition is not met by any technical or legal exemption. For supposing if Jesus were not a son of Adam and thus legally free from “Adamic condemnation” he would still have failed to qualify for the position of redeemer if he had sinned. Which shows clearly that it was his sinlessness which qualified him for the position of redeemer and not any legal or technical freedom from condemnation.

In the final analysis it is sin which brings condemnation and not necessarily descent from Adam. True, our descent from Adam gives us a nature which easily gives way to sin and in every case other than Jesus has resulted in sin – for the scripture states that “all have sinned.” God has “concluded all under sin” (Galatians 3:22) because he knew that all would sin. Thus all men are condemned and God is just in bringing all men to the grave. Legal descent from Adam is not, therefore, the point; but personal transgression is the condemnation. This did not apply to Jesus, he was free from sin, there was no condemnation upon him, and he was therefore able to offer himself as the redeemer on behalf of others.”

Reply by Ernest Brady:-

I have read your statement of objections to our view that the legal status of Jesus was a vital element in The Atonement. As you know, our belief is that the sole purpose of the Virgin Birth was to produce a man who was personally free and uncondemned and therefore in a position to offer himself as a sacrifice. If this was not its purpose why was Jesus not the son of Joseph? Your view seems to be some-thing like a middle position between ourselves and Christadelphians. It is certainly to be preferred to their view that Jesus was under condemnation because he was a human being and that his death was for himself, but I believe it is open to the strongest scriptural and logical objections

and that eventually you will be compelled by your own reasoning to accept the conclusions reached by Edward Turney in "The Sacrifice of Christ."

I accept your premises down to the question "But what are the facts? Was Jesus a son of Adam or not?" I believe that this question, put in this way confuses the issue at the very start. What do you mean by a son of Adam? We do not and never have questioned that Jesus was a son of Adam, in that he was a human being, but the fact that he was a son of Adam in the same sense as we are all sons of Adam does not alter the fact that his legal status was different from that of all other men because he was the son of God. The point is that no man can be literally the son of two fathers. We have all got lots of ancestors and if Adam and Eve were literally the first human beings then we are all descended from them. This applies equally to Jesus. But we have each only one father; we are each one of us only the child of one father and one mother. Therefore, if we accept that Jesus was the son of God, it follows that he cannot have been a son of Adam in the same sense as we are. If he had been begotten by Joseph he would have been a son of Adam in the sense you maintain, but in that case he could not have been the son of God as the scripture says.

It is perfectly true as you say, that "Adam" can mean "man" and vice-versa, but Adam as a person is not the same as "man." as a race or family, so that it is not justifiable to reason that because Jesus spoke of himself as "the son of man" therefore he was a son of Adam. Adam was the direct father only of his own children. He was the forefather or ancestor of Jesus, in that Mary was a descendant of Adam, but this is a different thing entirely from saying that Jesus was a son of Adam. God was his father and this fact overrules every other aspect of his relationship.

The facts are clear. He was a man like other men, of the same nature and flesh and blood, being produced out of the being of his mother like any other child. The difference was that the life which she conceived was the result of a miracle, not of a marriage and the question is, why was this necessary? We believe that the answer is the key to The Atonement and that if we haven't got it, we haven't got the truth necessary for salvation. Its significance is that the life of Jesus did not come from Adam but from God and it is the application of this truth about his origin which alone will explain the Atonement,

Not many people realise that the human race, although what biologists call bisexual, is scripturally regarded as female - like nature, the great mother. Everybody accepts that that part of the race which will finally constitute the Church is spoken of as the Bride of Christ, although it will consist of both sexes. We read in the account of creation:

"In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them and called their name Adam, in the day they were created."

He called their name Adam, so that in the generic sense "Adam" comprises both men and women, for they were one flesh. Eve was taken out of Adam and they were called by one name. The significance here is that it was both Adam and Eve who were the one parent of Jesus and this is the true sense in which he was, on one side, the son of man. God raised up an heir to the lost inheritance of his first created son Adam, by an infusion of new life into a spiritually or legally dead stock.

This was the expectation of all the patriarchs and prophets, like David who foresaw that God would raise him up an heir, his (David's) son "according to the flesh" but his Lord according to the spirit. They did not know how it would be accomplished - they only recognised the necessity. This was how Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ. It is a sad thing that Christians today, having the scriptural record of how the problem was solved are so stupid as to fail to see its necessity. Although it was to them a mystery, a thing which angels desired to look into, the prophets foresaw the need for a redeemer qualified as Christ was; they spoke and wrote about it, believed it and it was counted to them for righteousness. We know when and how it happened, we have the living record of the Word

made flesh and there are only a handful of us in the world who understand and accept its meaning.

It probably sounds strange to say that Adam and Eve were the mother of Jesus - how could a man be a mother? Literally of course he could not, but a very superficial inspection of the human anatomy reveals in the male sex mammary decorations apparently purposeless but indicating a closer affinity between the sexes than is generally recognised and which suggest that although bisexual the human race is in fact more feminine than masculine. Therefore since we know that God was the father of Jesus it must follow that man, in the generic sense, was his mother.

As you say, the genealogy of Jesus on Mary's side is traced back to Adam; on Joseph's side it is traced back to David; but neither of these was the father of Jesus. It was Eve who was to be the mother of all living and she is, scripturally, one flesh with Adam. Thus, Jesus was descended from Adam and was the son of man according to the flesh, but since the virgin could never have borne him apart from the miracle by which he was conceived, it follows that his life came from God, He was a new creation, raised up, not in the Adamic family but out of the Adamic family, by a Father who intervened to provide a Saviour.

It seems to me utterly unreasonable, even on the face of it, admitting that Jesus was the son of God, to maintain that he was also the son of Adam, or to deny that there was not this great legal distinction between him and all other men, but when it is upon this very point that the justice and legality of the divine plan of redemption is founded it amazes me that people find it so difficult to accept.

You say we find no suggestion that Jesus escaped legal descent from Adam by not having a human father. But this is precisely why he did not and could not have had a human father. I would have said on the contrary, that we find nothing else but the very strongest direct and deductive evidence that Jesus had no legal descent from Adam and that our teaching that if he had been a child of Adam he could not have been the saviour of the world is based upon the clearest and most conclusive evidence it is possible to find in scripture. What could be clearer than Jesus own words?

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the son to have life in himself.”

“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me shall live by me.”

“If God were your father ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God... ye are of your father the devil.”

“If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

“Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute? Of their own children or strangers? Peter said, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, "Then are the children free.”

If there were nothing but such passages as these there is ample evidence that Jesus had a freedom, a right to life which he had before ever he could have established a claim to it by sinlessness in the way you suggest. He was holy, that is, set apart from his birth. He belonged to God. His sinlessness later justified his status but it was not by sinlessness that he acquired it but by his birthright.

But there is very much more; one only needs to explore the question of why Jesus was the son of a virgin to realise that it was not primarily his sinlessness which qualified him to be the redeemer. We agree that if he had sinned he would have failed, but if his sinlessness was due to the fact that he alone had the strength to overcome because he was the son of God, then his sinlessness had no virtue. He was no example to us. He might as well have been an automaton. It would be open to anyone to say “If I had been the son of God instead of being the son of my human father, I could have been sinless

like Jesus.” But we know in our hearts that if we tried, hard enough we could overcome all our temptations. I agree that the scripture says. “All have sinned” but this may not mean exactly what it says - there are some very remarkable characters who seem to be the exceptions which prove the rule. However it be, we know that Jesus had our nature and was tempted like we are, so that his sinlessness was not due to his divine origin but to his determination to be obedient.

So, if it was not the purpose of the virgin birth to enable him to overcome his own temptations, what was the purpose? If you reject our view that it was to bring into the world a man who was not born under the condemnation which Adam brought upon himself and his heirs, ought you not to offer an alternative explanation which does not nullify the triumph of Jesus over his own weakness? You ask the question, “Supposing Jesus had sinned, even though he was free from Adamic condemnation would he not have failed as a redeemer?” Most certainly he would, but this is no reason to conclude that he was not free by birth from before his probation began. On the contrary; if he had been under any kind of condemnation or not legally free, even though he had been personally sinless he could not have given his life as a sacrifice. This is the whole point of The Atonement. This understanding of Jesus legal freedom is the only foundation upon which an adequate explanation of his death is possible.

There are principles underlying the Laws of Sacrifice which prefigure the sacrifice of Christ and if we do not see them and apply them it is impossible to understand it. The offering had to be the property of the offerer. It had to be selected from amongst those animals which were ceremonially clean. It had to be perfect of its kind and free from injury or blemish. The sacrifice made to deliver the human race from the bondage of sin was made by God himself. The sacrifice He offered was His own Son, His own property. Have you noticed in Paul's last words to the church at Ephesus (Acts 20, 29) he says “feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with blood of His own.” This was not Jesus he was referring to as having purchased, but God. The blood was the blood of Jesus but it belonged to God and with it God had purchased the flock back to Himself. Could you have any clearer proof than this that initially it was his legal status as a free son of God which qualified Jesus as the redeemer? If Jesus had legally belonged to Adam, God would have been violating His own law and His own principles by offering that which belonged to someone else and which was ceremonially unclean. The sinlessness of Jesus is only one element; to have made an offering in which freedom from sin was the only requirement observed would have been the same as if the High Priest had offered up a perfect and unblemished animal but had selected it from amongst those which were ceremonially unclean.

There is the same clear principle of ownership in that other figurative description of the Atonement as a ransom. Man is in bondage because of sin. The life of the human race was forfeited by Adam and this is the debt; this is the price which Jesus paid to ransom us back to God.

If Jesus himself was in the same bondage as humanity, he could not have released even himself, even by his perfect obedience and death; “No man can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom.” If Jesus' own life had come from the life which was legally lost in Adamic condemnation he would have been as bankrupt as we are and therefore could not have paid down his life to ransom ours.

You say that in the final analysis it is sin which brings condemnation, not necessarily descent from Adam. This is true, but our need of redemption is not the final analysis - it is the first step in the process of salvation. The final analysis is the giving of account before the Lord, and the unforgivable sin will be the having rejected him.

Sin brought condemnation to Adam, and if we were treated as individuals placed under a law requiring perfect obedience it would bring condemnation to us. But for the purpose of salvation we are not regarded as individuals, but as the family of Adam, who is our Federal head. If we perish with the world it will not be because we are being punished for our personal sins but because we are without God and without hope. This is what is meant by the statement “the scripture hath concluded

all under sin,” and not as you suggest, that all men are sinners (which may be true) or God foresaw that all would sin (which is not true, for infants are incapable of sinning, yet they die) and condemned them in advance. All are concluded under the one sin, the sin of the world “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” That sin of the world is the sin for which Jesus made vicarious atonement and this represents all the sins of mankind. If we were not all scripturally included in the one life of Adam which he forfeited by his disobedience, we could not be the subjects of the one act of deliverance accomplished by Jesus when he gave his life to pay Adam’s debt, a life for a life, a ransom for many, the just for the unjust. As you say, in the final analysis, sin brings condemnation, but, if we were each initially held responsible and accountable before God, if we were to have any hope of salvation under the redemptive principle - and there is no other - we would each have required an individual righteous saviour who would be willing to give his life for us. The hidden wisdom of God brought in The Federal principle, under which a multitude can be saved out of the race by a simple legal transfer - requiring not perfection of life and a faultless obedience as under the Law but belief and obedience.

The great fact which so many people either lose sight of or have never seen, is that salvation depends primarily not on the forgiveness of our sins but on our redemption, and these are two entirely separate and distinct things. Judged according to the law of God and by the example of Christ, the individuals of the race are sinners, but they are not held responsible while in ignorance and darkness. Jesus said, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men prefer darkness,” or again, “Except I had come and spoken unto them they had not had sin,” showing that enlightenment brings responsibility. But when we become enlightened and responsible we find that what God requires initially is not strict obedience to a legal code (as the Jews thought and sought to their sorrow to observe) but faith in the promises made to the fathers. When we learn what these are and what faith involves; we find that we are under the law of (the) sin and (the) death and ready to perish because the whole world lieth in sin. If anyone then thinks he can obtain forgiveness and salvation by good works he is doomed to failure; the death which passed upon all men (not natural death but the wages of sin - death as a penalty) which was incurred in Eden but not inflicted, still hangs over the race and will either confine him to the grave to which nature (not sin) brings most of us in the natural order, or if he is so far responsible by what he knows of the purpose of God, will require him to be brought forth in the resurrection to condemnation and the suffering of the penalty he will have personally deserved by spurning the offer of salvation. One who really wants to obtain forgiveness has to follow the procedure laid down in the Gospel; recognise that he is in Adam and therefore dead in sin; that Christ literally suffered on the Cross the death which Adam incurred, in order to pay the debt of the human race; through the symbol of baptism he can terminate his life in Adam and rise to a new life in Christ. He passes from under the law of sin and death and comes under Christ as his new Federal head and the law of the spirit of life in Christ.

Thus, I believe that the view expressed in your last paragraph that it is personal transgressions which brings condemnation is very far short of the truth and obscures the most important part of what God has revealed of His purpose and His reasons for giving His own son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I do not need to remind you that the Gospel was primarily to the Jews and as they were already in covenant relationship and had been individually and typically redeemed by the ransom money which had to be paid for every soul, they were therefore accountable for their personal transgressions. Thus for them baptism was a baptism of repentance and remission of sins as well as an induction into Christ. But as far as we as Gentiles are concerned, we have no standing whatsoever until we receive the call and come into Christ and become Jews by adoption. We therefore consider it is a mistake for us to baptise for remission of sins. We ought simply to baptise into the Name of Jesus Christ. The remission of sins is covered but is of secondary importance - God will forgive sins freely to those who ask and repent - He will not accept anyone who has not been redeemed.

These are the reasons why I think recognition of the fact that it is our position under divine law that matters, not sinlessness. It's so important and especially that Jesus was born free, the heir of all

things. That was how he was rich and became poor for our sakes, by suffering in our stead, all included in Adam, the penalty due to sinners. It was thus that he became the saviour of all men, for our natural existence we owe to the fact that the original sin was passed over in the forbearance of God until He should bring into the world the one who could finally take away its power, but he is especially the saviour of them that believe because through him they have the hope of life more abundant.

We all need the healing hand of the Saviour and the present situation suggests that the time is short. May we be found worthy.

With sincere love in His Name, E.Brady