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Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are sorry to hear that Brother Horace Taylor has not been well recently as he has been suffering from shingles in the head which is affecting his right eye. Several have expressed their concern and we all send our Kind Regards to you, Horace. We hope and pray that you are now well on the way to recovery with no serious after-effects.

Once again several of you have written at length concerning various points of view which have been expressed in recent Circular Letters.

Brother Phil Parry writes:

In answer to these letters, the point I was emphasising in the last issue of the Circular Letter was that all are dead before they can pass from death into life and those who never pass from death into life and those who have not yet passed from death into life are called dead even while they live. This is the teaching of Jesus Christ when He said "Let the dead bury their dead." Matthew 8:22. And in the parable of the prodigal son - "This my son was dead, and is alive again;" Luke 15:24. Also Paul in Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Again in verse 5, "Even when we were dead in sins." 1 Timothy 5:6; "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." 1 Peter 4:6; "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead..." etc. In these quotations we see a consistency of teaching of people being referred to as dead unless -the operation of faith converts them to belief and acceptance. It is generally understood that there will be some sort of rebellion at the end of the thousand years reign. These rebels never pass from death into life; they are referred to as the rest of the dead in the sense that they are the last of the dead ever to live. They are dead in trespasses and sins; they are dead even while they live; as we once were before we passed out of Adam into Christ, but these rebels do not accept Christ and are therefore called dead; and if this reasoning is correct they have never lived before, just as we have never lived before.

Brother Phil also writes:

"I can see what you mean in regard to Daniel 12:2 as a parable related to Ezekiel 37, but the difficulty in accepting it is that you have only one "awakening," this through the revelation of the Messiah and the gospel preaching - the other section are not said to reject this message, they are said to awake to shame, and the everlasting contempt of God for their rejection of His Son before they died and returned to the dust of the earth."

Having made the point that in the New Testament both Jesus Christ and the Apostles refer to people as being dead while they live, it is my understanding that here in Daniel 12:2 we have a comparative simile, and these referred to by Daniel as awaking are not sleeping in death (as only the righteous are said to sleep in death), but are alive at the time of the preaching of the Everlasting Gospel by the converted Jew (at which time the saints are with Jesus Christ, having been taken out of the world), and, while understanding the message of the Everlasting Gospel, reject it to their shame.

Brother Phil continues:

“As I see it the title to everlasting life was already a gift to the former (see Daniel 12:2), and the shame was to be the experience of standing before the Great White Throne, not necessarily when the former awakened.

In answer to this point may I quote from your own article, “Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple,” in this issue, in which you write “The holy place was that which was consecrated to the Lord; into which no heathen, nor stranger, nor any in a state of impurity, might enter.” How much greater is the Greater White Throne than any Temple made by man! I cannot envisage mortal man standing before it, for surely no sinner would be taken so far!

Regarding Revelation 19:11-16, Brother Leo writes:

“I am inclined towards the view that these verses refer to Christ. The army following Him is probably the saints. But I must disagree with the view that for the saints to go to war is contrary to Christ's teaching. We are not to kill now, but when Christ returns to fight the rebels, somebody will have to do the killing. Look at the ancient kingdom of Israel, the forerunner of the one to come. There were many times when it was a sin not to kill. Saul's failure to kill Agag cost him the throne (although he had gone against God's commandment once before when he presumed to sacrifice while waiting for Samuel). So it was left to Samuel to kill Agag, not an action by a man of peace. Elijah slew the prophets of Baal. And in 1 Kings 20:39-43 Ahab was rebuked for letting Ben-hadad escape with his life, to mention only a few examples. We are certainly not to kill now, but when we are to assist Christ in subduing wickedness we may have to do it. However, only at God's command. God has the prerogative to decide when to take life.

Brother and Sister Linggood write concerning Ezekiel's Temple:

“With regard to the matter on the Temple of Ezekiel's prophecy, seeing that it follows the conversion of Israel and as the nation will still be mortal, they will need a building in which to worship and be taught, and especially the nations of the world who will be ignorant of God's ways just as the Jews were when coming out of Egypt, but as we see it, the serving priesthood will obviously be mortal, the blood sacrifices will be retrospective, looking back to our Lord's great sacrifice just as the Israelites did to their redemption at the exodus from Egypt at their Passover ceremony. The following references suggest such a focal point of meeting: Micah 4:1,2 and Isaiah 2:2,3. The immortalised saints are in a different category and will not need a temple made with hands.

Brother Phil writes:

“It is common knowledge... that what you say of 1 John 5:7 is supposed to be spurious and not in the original manuscripts before the fifth century A.D. yet the Christadelphian Statement of Faith commences with a belief of the Bible as the inspired writings of the Prophets and Apostles except where some of those writings are of doubtful 1 origin. They have been known to lecture people on the Bible inspire and after doing so and being questioned, for example on 1 John 5:7 have been known to say, “Oh, that should not be there,” and then begins the taking away and the adding to, of this acclaimed inspired word, and one error begets another... I find such quotations are better left as they are than express that they are spurious even if this is so. It is for those who believe them not to be spurious to explain the meaning if they can.”

I would like to thank Brother Phil for his comment and appreciate his point that we should leave it for those who believe certain portions of our Bible not to be spurious to explain the meaning if they are able. However, we should all be aware of the limitations of translators and the difficulties they encounter. While we all believe scripture was given by inspiration of God, it does not follow that the translators were inspired; far from it, the vast number of translations are proof of this as each seeks to be more accurate than any before it. It is only good practice to question anything we might see as an anomaly.

Also, Brother Phil notes, “The reference to leprosy on page 8 at the top, Jeff says the disease was chosen by God to remind men of their estrangement from Him because of their sins.” Here again, Jeff

wishes to make an alteration and suggests the words “because of their sins” be deleted as this is confusing, for while it was Adam's sin that initially estranged the human race from God, for those who have come out of Adam and into a covenant relationship with their Creator it is possible for them to be again estranged from God by personal sins as the Apostle Paul argues, “shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. Know ye not that whomsoever ye obey, his servants ye are whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto life.” Romans 6:16. Also Romans 11:22, “... if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” However, leprosy was chosen by God as a comparison with being born in Adam; both are 'unclean'. The difference is that the leper is physically unclean while all in Adam are legally unclean, but in each case through no fault of their own.

Brother and Sister Linggood add further comment regarding the second death:

“We think the scriptures are specific regarding the second death, there is no doubt that it is judicial and that the responsible sinners will be raised to receive retribution (Revelation 20:11-15). Besides, it is not reasonable to believe that such should suffer only a natural death, as most of the righteous experience that as well.

And to complete the extracts from your letters I again quote from Brother Phil's letter:

“In considering Daniel 12:1 it speaks of a time when certain people will be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. There is a reference to Isaiah 4:3,4 which speaks of certain ones left in Israel who are blessed with an important name, a name that can take away reproach, and they shall be called holy, everyone that is written to life in Jerusalem. I think of the faithful who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord and are written in the book of life, both Jew and Gentile, and at this time many written in that book who sleep in the dust of the earth who awake to everlasting life. See also Exodus 32:32; Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 13:8.

“Paul had the spirit and revelation from Jesus, so did John. But we can be sure where direct doctrine is concerned Paul's teaching on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 and in Thessalonians, of rising incorruptible from dust and the change to incorruptibility of those faithful and alive unto the coming of the Lord, is correct, and those who make out a process of it are not consistent in saying the Bible is the inspired writing of the Prophets and Apostles.

And I am sure we all wholeheartedly agree.

Once again the political scene has dramatically changed in the Middle East. Do we now see Isaiah 24:16,17 being fulfilled, “The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously: yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.”? Or will this crisis pass and relative normality be restored for a time? Which ever it is to be we are near to the time when there will be “distress of nations, with perplexity; (i.e. no way out); the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Luke 21:25,26.

How earnest should be our prayer “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

With sincere love to all in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Russell.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE TEMPLE

Ezekiel 40:1-5

Like Daniel, Ezekiel was of the captivity, taken from his native land of Israel to Chaldea under Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and was dwelling near the river Chebar, a river of Mesopotamia,

which falls into the Euphrates after having run through Mesopotamia from east to west. But Ezekiel's captivity was eight years later than Daniel's, if chronological details by some students are correct. Ezekiel was but a young man of around twenty years of age, and after some years of captivity at about thirty years of age the Spirit of God began to operate upon him because of his respect for God and His precepts, which captivity in a strange land could not dispel from his mind. He was evidently and continually mindful of the Holy Covenant, and those promises that he knew a faithful Creator would eventually bring to pass. He had visitations and visions before the one we are considering and his many experiences and accompanying physical and mental suffering for the testimony of God (like John on Patmos), makes us feel very humble and of little account.

In this chapter 40, Ezekiel speaks of the hand of God being upon him and in the visions of God brought him into the land of Israel and set him upon a very high mountain by which was the frame of a city on the south. Previous to this Ezekiel had been shown in vision the abominations committed in Jerusalem by those who had been left in the land after he had been carried away captive. What remained of the city and the Temple had become a den of idolatrous worship and practice and after seeing that there were some who refrained from such things and received a mark of distinction on their foreheads by the man clothed in white linen, and hearing the declared fate of those who received not this mark of approval, Ezekiel was then carried in vision by the Spirit to Chaldea, losing sight of the chariot of Divine glory, and began to show to the captivity what the Lord had shown to him.

When I read of the man clothed in white linen putting the mark or seal upon the foreheads of those who sighed and cried out against the abominations, I think of those in John's vision who were Divinely sealed (Revelation 7). The lesson to be learned from these two visions is the same as that which God enjoined upon Moses for the building of the Tabernacle. In fact, where any building has had to be constructed with material things as a type of the spiritual. God has been the Architect. First were the directions to Noah, then to Moses, "See that thou make all -things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount." Israel under David had arrived at a stage when God had subdued the surrounding enemies under them, and no more journeyings with a sectional and removable Tabernacle was now necessary, so it was in David's heart to build a more permanent and stationary house unto the Lord, yet having the same pattern of that enjoined upon Moses. With this in mind David prepared most of the stones and other materials, but God would not allow him to build it because he had shed blood abundantly in God's sight (1 Chronicles 22:7-9). That David had in mind the true pattern is confirmed in 1 Chronicles 28:11-19 which reads: "All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of -this pattern." Much can be learned from the 28th, also the 29th and from 2 Samuel 7 where God not only speaks of Solomon, but of His only begotten Son of Mary. David was not slow to perceive -this and that God would be the Builder of the house of the future (Hebrews 8:1-2. and chapters 3-6).

Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" Jesus who was the stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, declared, "Upon -this statement of Peter, which is the foundation Rock, I will build my church." This could not have meant building upon Peter, for as the Apostle Paul declares, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This has been bound in Heaven and no Pope has any power to loose this Divine order.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that the purpose of the Creator entailed first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual, so that the lessons gained from the natural could be applied to a higher standard of meaning and spiritual understanding. We are told that Abraham, by faith, looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God and therefore God has prepared that city. God speaks of things that are not as though they are (Hebrews 11:10-16). In company with Abraham we are told and exhorted by Paul, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection, or mind, on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:1-2. This I believe, is why Ezekiel was shown the abominations and idolatrous practices of his people who had set their minds on the things of the earth. (The serpent on his belly who could feed only on dust or earthly affections, the lowest parts of the carnal mind). "Declare these things you have seen to your brethren of the captivity," was the word of God to Ezekiel after the hand of God was upon him and had brought him in vision into the land of Israel and set him upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the

man said unto me. Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.” Ezekiel 40:1-4.

And so commenced the measuring and the Divine instructions concerning what Ezekiel would witness in company with the man in the vision. It has been proved by architectural scholars that the Temple measurements were identical with that of Solomon's and that the surrounding buildings of the city were in many ways similar, so I need not labour you on repetition with those of Ezekiel but you may check them if you feel inclined.

Concerning the gates and entry into the Sanctuary which was surrounded by a high wall, not much is said in the Book of Kings, but Ezekiel does dwell more on their description and meaning. Of this wall we read in verse 20, “It had a wall round about... to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.” The holy place was that which was consecrated to the Lord; into which no heathen, nor stranger, nor any in a state of impurity, might enter. The profane place was that in which men, women, Gentiles, - pure, or impure, might be admitted. Josephus says that in his time there was a wall built before the entrance three cubits high, on which there were posts fixed at certain distances, with inscriptions on them in Latin and Greek, containing the laws which enjoined purity on those who entered; and forbidding all strangers to enter on pain of death. I mention these things because of its bearing and significance spiritually to Revelation 21:10 on.

The question arises, “Why should God tell Ezekiel to declare all that he is shown, to the house of Israel if it was not for the reason that they might be ashamed of all their adverse conduct and might see fit to correct it according to the pattern? Even we ourselves are exhorted to take the Lord Jesus as our pattern and to grow in grace and unto the fullness of His stature. Israel were to be made ashamed of their iniquities through the pattern and the measurements, and were to remember both, in the event that some among them would have opportunity to return to the land and rebuild the city and Temple, for over the many years of captivity such things could have been forgotten. This then was the Temple and city that Ezekiel saw restored and whereby, if they had been obedient, to the statutes and precepts Israel would have lived long and in peace in the land which God promised to the fathers for an everlasting possession. But we must also look beyond this Temple made with hands, - the pattern of things in the heavens, - to the Heavenly things themselves. Revelation 21:2, 10-27 & chapter 22. “Howbeit,” said Stephen, “The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet. Heaven is my throne and earth is my foot-stool: what house will ye build me, or what is the place of my rest?” Acts 7:45-50. See also Acts 17:24-31.

Many of us may have been given the impression that the material Temple of Ezekiel's vision was to be built during the millennial Age for the future worship of God by an Israel returned from exile. I accepted this at one time until a man caused me to have doubts and not to hold dogmatic assumptions which are only teachings of men who had not really weighed up the difficulties, arising from the New Testament teaching. Having studied Acts 7 and 17, Revelation 21 and 22, and especially the epistle to Hebrews, I cannot accept what would be tantamount to a return to an old covenant which was faulty. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant - this man because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood (passeth not from one to another). Hebrews 7:22-24. After reading Hebrews 8 can we conceive of a returning to the Law of Moses and its ritual of sin-offerings? “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins - Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do Thy will, O God - Sacrifice and offerings for sin and burnt offerings thou wouldest not and hadst no pleasure therein? which are offered by the law.” Hebrews 10. “Hath the Lord so great delight in burnt- offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;” said Samuel to King Saul. If the sacrifices under the old covenant had been mixed with faith, as was the case with Abraham in “seeing him who is invisible,” the blood of bulls and goats as types of the true Messiah to come, would be of value prospectively, and Messiah's death would retrospectively validate that faith, because faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11.

Now when the Lord Jesus is returned and His identity and presence is known, the law going forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, there will not be a forward looking faith, neither a state of ignorance - “They will not teach every man his neighbour saying. Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.” Some have, in the past, taught and suggested that Ezekiel's Temple would be

built and used for Divine worship, and that the priests, the sons of Zadok, would be from among the glorified saints of the first resurrection, but it was pointed out to me by the same man some years ago, that these sons of Zadok were not to wear a garment that would cause sweat, Ezekiel 44:18. One cannot imagine incorruptible saints sweating, no matter what they wear. The whole of chapter 44 leaves little doubt in my mind that all that God revealed in vision to Ezekiel and all that He commanded him was for the purpose of showing the people, the priests, and the princes who had polluted the Temple, that they had not kept the charge of His holy things, and that when He would bring them from Babylon to their own land of promise where the city and Temple would be restored, they would be expected to observe all the ordinances of the house of the Lord and all the laws thereof, chapter 44, verse 5. That this Temple of Ezekiel's vision is a continuation of the former in the material sense, can be seen from Exodus and from the book of Kings, but I have no doubt that the pattern and ordinances speak of a spiritual Temple and of a city whose Builder and Maker is God with His Son the chief corner-stone. In John 2:19, Jesus, after exhibiting His zeal for the material Temple which should have been a house of prayer but had been made a house of merchandise once again, said to them who required a sign, "Destroy this Temple (my body of flesh and blood), and in three days I will raise it up." The disciples knew afterwards that He referred to the temple of His body as we find it so much recorded; see 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:18-22; Colossians 2:9,10; Hebrews 8:1-13.

The lesson that the Jews of Ezekiel's day failed to learn from the pattern of the Temple, we who claim to be Christ's, and living stones of the spiritual temple of God, must learn and have ever before our eyes in viewing Him as the chief cornerstone in order to keep ourselves at all times in line with Him so that the building will be of perfect and harmonious measure - the measure of the Angel - even the fullness also of the stature and measure of the man of Christ Jesus, for in that Temple dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and thus He was Immanuel, God with us, and thus God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. As Ezekiel was a sign to the house of Israel, so was Jesus in His own mission to those who were lost by their own vain tradition and polluted worship. "Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern ... The whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house." "That holy thing born of thee-- the Son of man, by conduct showing the pattern, - but the Son of God with power whom the Father sanctified and brought into the world and in whom He was well pleased." "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" "Follow me." "He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps." In the Book of Nehemiah we find the record of what transpired and caused him to a desire to return to his land and repair the wall of Jerusalem and rebuild also the Temple. Many names are recorded of those who returned from the captivity through the benevolence of king Artaxerxes and the efforts of Nehemiah, the Thirtieths, or governor, and of course, the God of Heaven Strange it appears, that in the whole list of names in the Book of Nehemiah of those who returned of the captivity, such as Jeremiah, Daniel, Zerubbabel and Jeshua (probably Joshua), I could not find a mention of Ezekiel who was indeed a priest. See Nehemiah 12:1 and Zechariah 4:9,10 and 6:10-15.

In chapter 43 Ezekiel is given instructions of what he is to do in the ministrations of the Temple, to cleanse and purge the altar etc., in fact, a repetition of all that was done under the law of Moses. Now it is also stated in chapter 44 verse 9, "Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, or any stranger that is among the children of Israel." As I see it, this could only apply to the Temple of Nehemiah's restoration; it does not harmonise with what Paul teaches in Romans 4 where he speaks of the faith of Abraham being reckoned when he was in uncircumcision. We know also that baptism by immersion into the death of Christ replaced the law of circumcision to Jew and Gentile so why introduce it again into a future Temple of the Millennial Age when the Antitype of the offerings and the substance of the shadows under the law is actually present and reigning from Zion and Jerusalem? "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:6-8.

Ezekiel 43, recording God's instructions to him concerning the priests, the sons of Zadok, and what they were to do in the Temple, is to me the missing proof for my contention that the Temple Ezekiel saw was the same that Nehemiah, Daniel*, Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and many more were instrumental in re-building. Find the evidence that Ezekiel did return and do as instructed, and the case I have demonstrated could be

more sound. There remains, however, another scripture recording to take into account and as stated by the man I mentioned earlier. This is found in Zechariah 4:9, and 6:10, "And this shall come to pass if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God." What was the position when Jesus appeared to them? The majority had lost touch with truth and with righteousness - they rejected God by rejecting His Son and they once again were scattered among the nations. Yet Zechariah 8 records a letter and more pleasant prospect for those who become Jews inwardly through speaking every one truth with his neighbour and they will cause others to follow their example, being of such humble mind as to take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew after the Spirit and led to the place where God has chosen to place His Name. See Zechariah 8. Also Ephesians 2. (Note * Daniel is mentioned in Ezra 8:2. I am not sure it is the Daniel named Belteshazzar).

May we also allow the Word of the Spirit which has shown us the true pattern and example to follow, chisel and form us as living stones to form the Spiritual Temple which will constitute a fit habitation of God when fitly framed together.

Brother Phil Parry.

A Few Thoughts Concerning Parables

It is not my intention to deal with any particular parable or proverb. In our language many different words can be used to portray the same subjects which have a common ending, sometimes it can be thought that they are a duplication. This may be so as regards their purport/ but we find a difference in the basis upon which parables and proverbs are put forth.

First I should like to look at the matter of a parable. PARABLE. The dictionary definition of the meaning of the word, in most I have looked at in effect give it as:- A narrative (often fictitious) used to point a moral or illustrate a spiritual relation or condition: a short allegory.

The basis upon which a parable is put forward (its foundation) is usually an everyday event or experience of most men which they have seen or know to be a fact; with an underlying purpose, mostly material. But to us brethren and sisters, we look for more from a parable; something much deeper, the purpose and final purport has to be sought after. Here may I suggest you read again the article "Why Speakest Thou to Them in Parables?," by Brother Phil Parry in the Nazarene Comforter No. 31. January 1982.

If we turn to the scriptures, Bible Encyclopaedia, Commentaries and Bible concordance; from these sources we shall get far more satisfaction than mere materialism. The 1944 edition of the Westminster Bible Dictionary describes a parable as:- "a method of speech in which moral or religious truth is illustrated from a common event or experience, either expressed or implied." There are what may be described as three classes of parables in the scriptures having as a base, (a) Nature, (b) discovery, (c) contrast; all of which have as stated earlier, a 'spiritual relation or condition,' each class confirms that which was written by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:46, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural and afterwards that which is spiritual."

In the Old Testament are at least 11 instances of parables recorded from the book of Judges to the prophet Ezekiel. On turning to the New Testament parable abound, mostly spoken by Jesus. In total 39 parables are recorded, of these only 6 appear in three Gospels; 4 in 2 Gospels, while 29 appear in 1 Gospel only. The Gospel of John, however, does not record any parables as such (the word parable does not appear in his record), the original word which is translated in most cases as parable - *masal* - and a very similar word in John's Gospel is given as 'figure,' 'riddle,' or 'wise saying.' A.M.Hunter stated he has identified what he regards a parable in 13 instances; as recorded on page 78 of a treatise he has written on John.

Mark chapter 4 gives us a very full account of what may be regarded as a nature based selection of a parable, one of the best known, in fact most children of years ago learnt of the parable of the sower in day school, but today, sadly, the subject of R.E. seems to be in the background among school curriculum, and

also in the homes of many. In this chapter of Mark, verses 3 to 8, we have the sower going forth; sowing, and the result. Most of us have seen at some time pictures of a man sowing seed in the method of long ago. Today it would be regarded as a very haphazard method, for so much depended on the wind as to where it landed, and other factors as to the results, as we are shown in verses 4 onward. Broadcasting seed can have very varied results. Ecclesiastes comes to mind, chapter 11 verse 1; "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

We are not expected to cast the Word of God haphazard in all circumstances without thought. In my mind, in the case of the sower in the parable I can imagine him early morning looking to the sky and doing his best to judge the force of the wind before he set forth with his seed container striding up and down the field, as he did so his eyes would be alert to any very stoney ground or rock or even small flocks of birds who would pounce upon the seed and devour it. Having sown the field he would then have to wait to see the result, the fruit of his labours lay in the hand of God to provide suitable sun, moisture and covering for its germination and growth. The harvest rests in the hand of God. Even so today, one's harvest still rests in the hand of God. Many are the advantages which have been made in agriculture. The modern farmer plants his seed direct into the ground, often having obtained an analysis of the field's soil before planting the seed so as to select that which is most suitable for a large and good return, but despite all effort by the use of chemical weed killers and feed to increase growth we often find that the natural elements as moisture, due to lack of rain a field has to be ploughed up and re-seeded. Many times we have seen crows pulling up the seedlings when they appear to be making a good start; and near harvest time if the corn has not ripened due to lack of sun, and even if there is a good crop a heavy rain storm flattens the crop.

In Genesis 1:29 we read: "And God said, behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

So we see from early times God is the Provider of food for man in his natural life. Before I leave the parable of the sower we should remember we have a very precious seed to sow, as we are reminded in the words of Acts chapter 10, verses 42 and 43, the work of sowing the word can be very varied. All sowers of the seed have not the same capability or work to do. But the harvest, even today, both natural and spiritual, is in God's hand. Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 3:6,

"I have planted, Apollus watered but God gave the increase." We must take heed how we sow, for our seed is the Word of God, and "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7). Sow with care

Let us now turn to Matthew chapter 13, where we have before us what may be described as a 'discovery' parable; verse 44, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

In the next verse we have another 'discovery' parable: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

In chapter 7 and verse 7 of this same gospel we read, "seek and ye shall find." In view of the last quoted words of scripture, I cannot agree with John Carter in his book entitled "Parables of the Messiah" when he states on page 106:

"It is the story of a man who suddenly and without any previous search, stumbles across treasure. The discovery was accidental, so far as the finder was concerned." We know that from time to time treasure is discovered such as ancient coins of gold or silver, and in some cases artefacts of value turn up by what we may call chance, they were not being searched for, but in such cases they are classed as treasure trove, whereas, in the case of an archaeological dig, where search is in progress, anything of value or significance found is treasure. In the case of the parable a search was being made; the treasure was not just stumbled across.

As with most parables we have the everyday facts given us. As to their moral or religious truths to be seen as their portend, much depends upon our upbringing or the religious persuasion of our parents or guardians during our early years before we think or act for ourselves. This accounts for such a diversion of opinions in religious matters. Even in what appears to be a simple parable. It is here we have to compare scripture with scripture to ascertain the final outcome of the purpose of God as seen in Numbers 14:21 where God, speaking to Moses, says, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD."

In the chapter from Matthew from which many of the parables, including the two quoted above - treasure hid in a field, and goodly pearls being sought - we are not given the identity of the person seeking either, in the former when it is found, for joy the finder hid it again; where it was hid this time we are not told.

Now a few words concerning what I class as "contrast" parables, the contrast is seen in the different reaction of the parties mentioned in the parables, as seen in Matthew 20. We read in verses 1 and 2, "a man that is an householder went out early in the morning to hire labourers.... and when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." At later times the householder, still being short of labourers, went out again at about the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour, looking for men to work for him; whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive, he told them. At the end of the day we see the steward was instructed to call the labourers and give them their hire, as seen in verses 8 to 15;

"Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the Goodman of the house, saying. These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us which have borne the burden and heat of the day... Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is and go thy way..."

The other parable I have in mind is that recorded in Luke 15 with its full details given in verses 11 to 32, generally referred to as the parable of the prodigal son, where we see the reaction of the two sons to their father being similar to that of the labourers to the householder. The younger son wanted his share now, in effect, why should I wait till later, he may have thought, what the future holds may change. So "the father divided unto them his living" we are told. The younger one took his share (verse 13), while it appears the elder stayed at home and carried on working with his father, (verses 30,31). Verse 13, "the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." In due time he was hungry and in want/ but came to his senses and had time to think; what were his thoughts? My father's servants have plenty of food; clothing and shelter. He decided to return home to his father and admit he had made a blunder, and express his deep sorrow. His father was pleased to have him back, for it was assumed he was lost or- dead, and expressed his joy in a practical way, as seen in verses 22 and 23. But the elder son was angry. Why all this fuss? I have served you faithfully all these years. Yes, he had, with the result "All that I have is thine."

A similar case is seen in the parable of the talents, where the receivers were told to occupy till the master returned. At the day of the masters' return a reckoning was made. Most men expect a good and profitable return. "Much expects much" is man's principle. But when we turn to God we find a difference of expectation. God requires faithful service according to our ability, whether He calls us in the early days or later in our life. The same is offered to all men by God, through His Son Jesus Christ. This is seen in John 6:68, and in John 17:3.

Before leaving the parables, let us remember the words of Matthew chapter 6 verse 33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." These things represent the material things God knows we need from day to day. They must not be our priority in life.

Brother Harvey Linggood.

“Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46,47).

However great our knowledge of the scriptures, however well we may reason among ourselves, however much logic we insist on applying, differing ideas regarding the how and the why of Jesus Christ's work of salvation abound. How many leave it to others to reason these things out and then accept their findings when Almighty God has extended the invitation to each one to “come now, and let us reason together,.... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). Also Jesus tells us to “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

“God is not the author of confusion,” (1 Corinthians 14:33); that appertains to man, and we can avail ourselves nothing, for, if our understanding is to be opened it will be by Jesus Christ, and only then can we know the truth.

The importance of understanding was known to Solomon who, through inspiration, wrote in Proverbs 4:7, “Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.”

The disciples of Jesus were God-fearing, devout law-abiding Jews, brought up through childhood to know the scriptures. They were chosen for their sincerity and integrity, and for three and a half years were with Jesus knowing Him to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour, yet it was after the resurrection that “opened he their understanding,, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

To all who will be His disciples the exhortation is “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7,8).

THE TWO SONS OF GOD

Chapter Seven

The Ascription of Sin to Christ

Any portion of sacred writing which has the appearance of discord with any other portion, ought to be carefully examined; and, to aid investigation, the serious thought of God's word being in contradiction to itself should not for one moment be entertained.

In every translation of the Bible there are many errors, and in those called original copies of the Hebrew we have no guarantee for complete accuracy. But the first object should be to harmonize, by sound reason and fair criticism, the text as it stands; for if a too ready inclination to solve difficulties on the ground of textual error be admitted, the mind will gradually relieve itself of the burden of close examination of all passages pertaining to the difficulty, and take an easy way to its explanation by making the supposed necessary alteration of the words.

The earnest labours of God-fearing biblical scholars are continually making plain and accordant many passages, which once presented what looked like insuperable obstacles; and it is only men who are wanting in faith and patience, that on account of present inability to understand some things, cast aside, as unworthy of reliance, the whole volume.

The title under which our present chapter is opened refers to certain seeming contradictions in doctrine, and these are of a most important and solemn character inasmuch as they belong to Him who is the foundation of our faith, the staff of all our hopes. Let us not imagine, however, that this foundation is or can be defective, - that this staff may turn out to be a broken reed; but let us see whether our ideas of their solidity and strength are in unison with the facts in the case.

In that memorable exposition of things concerning Himself which is found in Luke 24: 27 - 44, the Lord Jesus declared that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Psalms. It is in the Psalms that we find numerous passages which attribute sin to Christ; and the question is, how are these statements to be received, so as not to disagree with others more numerous and equally plain, which teach the perfect innocence of Jesus, affirming that in Him was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

The answer, that Christ committed no sin, only partly meets the difficulty; for if in His bodily composition He were the subject and partaker of sin, then sin was in Him, and by no fair honest reading of the word could it be asserted He was undefiled.

The eleventh verse of the twenty-fifth Psalm reads thus: "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Psalm 31:10, "For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed." Psalm 38:4, "For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." Verse 18, "For I will declare mine iniquity." Psalm 40:12, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." Psalm 51:2, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity." Verse 9, "Blot out mine iniquities."

These statements are held by some persons to refer to Christ. There can be no doubt that certain portions of the Psalms, from which they are extracted, do point to Him, for the apostles quote them with that intent; but whether the words above given are to be so understood is not positively stated. We perceive, however, no objection to this application if it be rightly apprehended; but when made with the avowed intention of proving sin to be in the Messiah, we are bound to demur.

Let us first give a correct definition of the term iniquity, in order that we may know what is signified by the use of that term in allusion to Christ. "Iniquity - Latin, *iniquitas* - absence of, or deviation from, equal or just dealing; want of rectitude; gross injustice; unrighteousness; wickedness." - Webster. Now, what is to be said to these things as regards Christ? If there were iniquity in Him in the days of His flesh, then it consisted either in the absence of, or deviation from, equal or just dealing; or else in the commission of gross injustice, unrighteousness, or wickedness; that is to say. He was guilty either of a sin of omission or commission. Iniquity is not a physical property/- it is a wilful neglect of duty, or an actual transgression of law. We ask, who will dare to aver these things of the Lord Jesus Christ? But, if those passages from the Psalms are applied to Christ, in order to prove Him under sin, and sin to be in Him, the result is either that an absurdity is asserted, as in the contention for iniquity as a physical property, or else sin is laid to His charge.

Take another verse. Psalm 38:5, "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." Parts of this Psalm are thought to refer to Messiah, and some include the words of this fifth verse. But who would accuse Jesus of foolishness. And who would be ridiculous enough to pretend that foolishness is a physical property; something in human flesh, or any kind of flesh? Yet, the views we are combating and exposing have no other choice, indeed no other is sought.

It is maintained by some scholars that several of these passages from the Psalms are found in an improper connection; that they do not accord with the subject and sentiments of the immediate context; and that they properly belong to other Psalms, Upon our own knowledge, however, we are not able either to affirm or to deny this.

Having assented to the proposition that the passages named may allude to Christ, that iniquity, sin, and foolishness are in some sense predicable of Him, it will be asked, what explanation have we to offer? We answer, there are two explanations which appear to us satisfactory; the first arises out of the peculiarity of the Hebrew language; the second from the doctrine concerning sacrifices.

“Dans le stile des Hebreux, ma rebellion signifie quelque fois la rebellion qui s'excite centre moi.” (Saurin.) That is, “In the Hebrew style, my rebellion sometimes means the rebellion which is raised against me.” Again, says the same writer, “in the Hebrew style they say my wrong, instead of saying the wrong done to me.” This information throws much light upon the passages in question; yet it is not, in our opinion, more satisfactory than the second explanation.

When the high priest of the Jews made expiation for sin, he laid his hand on the head of the victim, thereby transferring, as it was understood, the sins of the people from them to it. As soon as this was done the animal was looked upon as the sin, or the sin-bearer. In the Hebrew it is called the sin, the bullock the sin. So also of Christ, the great sacrifice. The sinless victim, for the time being, is regarded as the sin, because the sins have been laid upon Him. He bare our sins; God laid on Him the iniquities of us all. The sins and iniquities having been transferred to Him, they became His, not ours, and by His death they are taken away. He died for us. He gave His life a ransom for all. But the transfer of sins to Christ did not constitute Him really a sinner; had it been so, He could not have risen again; His death would have been as final as the death of the unredeemed. He voluntarily suffered the chastisement of our peace, and endured stripes due to the children of Adam.

Sins are transferred to Christ by imputation; in this way they were transferred to the animal victims. To bear sin in His body, means to bear the punishment due for sin, -that is, death. To make His redemption effectual it was needful to bestow on Him power to buy, and to subject Him to Trial similar to that under which Adam failed. There are the plainest proofs that -this was done; first, by His being God's Son; second, by His committing no offence against God's laws.

Some of the Psalms cited could not justly be applied to David, for, with few exceptions, he was a man after God's own heart. Indeed, no theory but that of imputed sin can give a satisfactory explanation, but that theory removes all difficulty.

The Holy Spirit in Relation to Sinful Flesh

The phrase “sinful flesh,” is not placed at the head of this article because it is either scriptural or rational: it is neither. It is now used to represent a grave and foolish error; in connection with the other phrase which precedes it namely, the Holy Spirit, we shall endeavour to shew what this error is, or rather that what we are about to speak of is an error.

But, before proceeding to the subject itself, a remark or two upon sinful flesh will be needful. Some of our readers may challenge the statement that sinful flesh is not a Bible expression, and direct our attention to Paul's words in Romans 8:3. We do not deny that the form of words is there in the English translation, but we affirm that those words are not a proper rendering of the Greek in that text. Sinful is an adjective assigning a certain quality or property to the flesh? but in the Greek there is no adjective. The original word is a noun in the genitive case, and the two words are sin's flesh, not sinful flesh.

A little consideration will shew the reader, who has not studied the matter, how important this difference is; he will perceive that, instead of flesh being sinful in quality, it is, according to the apostle's actual words, a property or possession belonging to sin; therefore it is not sinful flesh, but sin's flesh. This mistranslation being rectified, the reader may take his Concordance, which will reveal to him a remarkable fact, namely, that the words sinful flesh, do not occur once throughout the Scriptures.

Among Christians in general there is a belief, more or less serious, that, in the matter of religion, man can do nothing without the aid of the Holy Spirit, popularly styled the Holy Ghost. By this Agent, his mind must be stirred; he must receive faith and understanding; must be endowed with wisdom from on high, and strengthened with a resolution to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And the necessity for this assistance from the Holy Spirit, it is taught, in the defiled state of man's nature; he is a fallen creature and can do nothing for himself, but is entirely dependent on the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

In confirmation of this, and as a specimen of recognised authority, we transcribe Dr. Clarke's comment on John 3:5;

“To the baptism of water a man was admitted when he became a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and, in this baptism, he promised in the most solemn manner to renounce idolatry, to take the God of Israel for his God, and to have his life conformed to the precepts of the divine law. But the water that was used on the occasion was only an emblem of the Holy Spirit. The soul was considered as in a state of defilement, because of past sin; now, as by the water the body was washed, cleansed, and refreshed, so, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, the soul was to be purified from its defilement, and strengthened to walk in the way of truth and holiness.

“When John came baptizing with water, he gave the Jews the plainest intimations that this would not suffice? and that it was only typical of that baptism of the Holy Ghost, under the similitude of fire, which they all must receive from Jesus Christ, see Matthew 3:11. Therefore, our Lord asserts that a man must be born of water and the Spirit, i.e., of the Holy Ghost, which, represented under the similitude of water, cleanses, refreshes, and purifies the soul. Reader, hast thou never had any other baptism than that of water? If thou hast not had any other, take Jesus Christ's word for it, thou canst not, in thy present state, enter into the kingdom of God. I would not say to thee, merely read what it is to be born of spirit; but pray, O pray to God incessantly till He give thee to feel what is implied in it! Remember, it is Jesus only who baptizes with the Holy Ghost, see John 1:33. He who receives not this baptism has neither right nor title to the kingdom of God; nor can he, with any propriety, be termed a Christian, because that which essentially distinguished the Christian dispensation from that of the Jews was, that its Author baptized all His followers with the Holy Ghost.

“Though baptism by water into the Christian faith was necessary to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah, it is not necessary that by water and the Spirit (in this place) we should understand two different things; it is probably only an elliptical form of speech for the Holy Spirit, under the similitude of water, as in Matthew 3:11, the Holy Ghost and fire, do not mean two things, but one, viz., the Holy Ghost, under the similitude of fire, pervading every part, refining and purifying the whole.”

In making inquiry into the papal custom of saint-worship, that worship is found to rest entirely on the belief of the immortality of the soul, for it is not the bodies of the saints that are prayed to, but their souls. But when it is proved that the soul is mortal, not immortal, what becomes of all this worship and intercession for the souls of dead saints? It is worse than useless.

We should be very sorry to be thought to deny that there is any Holy Spirit, but we have good reasons for not giving credence to its operations on the minds of men to enable them to believe and live in the Christian faith. Furthermore, when it is shown that human nature is not that defiled thing which some affirm it to be, what need is there of these promptings and co-workings of the Holy Ghost to render it capable of believing and obeying the gospel? Here is a grave and prevalent error, arising out of the unproved and improvable proposition that man is made of sinful flesh.

If this were true we should be inclined to allow the reasonableness of the great personal work allotted to the Holy Ghost. Such a power would then be needful. But admitting it, we should still be involved in perplexity as regards the written Word, which is explicitly said to be sufficient to make one wise unto salvation; sufficient to thoroughly furnish unto every good work.

A matter which is altogether based on individual feeling, as is the gift of the Holy Ghost, must be very deficient and questionable as evidence of the possession of Divine truth; for we observe persons of widely varying beliefs all claiming the same heavenly gift; logically, therefore, the justification of one would be the condemnation of another.

But when we turn to the apostles and their friends, on whom the gift was bestowed we are not confronted with any such obstacles. They were all able and willing to demonstrate that they possessed supernatural power. We do not read that they make so much of feeling they had received the gift as that they employed it for their mutual edification, and as undeniable proof that they were preaching and teaching a doctrine not learned from man, but from God. It would seem that the pretended bestowal of the Holy Ghost is rather an impediment than an aid to the reception of the gospel by men of a reflective cast of mind; inasmuch as it is said to be enjoyed where reason can show that the principles of the Bible are neither understood nor followed.

The Quaker doctrine of "the light within" is part of this subject; but we do not intend to go into a detailed consideration of that phase of the question. It appears that this "light" is, on the whole, nothing more than what men call "conscience," a capital guide in general matters of good and evil, but inadequate to the incubation of the glorious gospel of the blessed God; also, of very little use in the acquisition of science or of art.

The apostle teaches that it is in the exercise of our senses that we learn to discern between good and evil. "The senses," scientifically so called, are the only avenues by which facts and arguments can enter into a man; but it is alleged that these are so defiled and depraved that no good can result from their action, unless moved and controlled by the Holy Ghost.

We have, however, never heard it contended that the Holy Ghost was essential to inform and guide man in finding out the laws by which the Almighty governs the universe - gravitation, attraction, repulsion, and motion. And what has confessedly been done without this agency cannot be matched by anything that has been done with it, if we exclude the miracles and powers of Christ and the apostles. In these we admit its presence and operation, but the general claim to it we deny as destitute of evidence? and we also deny the existence of that which is made the sole ground of its essentiality, that is, the sinfulness of human nature.

The power of the Holy Spirit being indispensable from such a cause amounts to the charge of sin, in a cruel shape, against God, and the exercise of a force which in justice had been superfluous; for if God had not created human nature just what it is, according to this argument there would have been no necessity for the intervention of the Holy Ghost. We anticipate the plea that man defiled his nature; but there is no evidence whatever to sustain this theory; it is only imaginary; and a calm investigation of the Divine record concerning man prior to transgression will quickly explode it as utterly untenable. Is it not beyond confutation that the same mental movements, the same moral proclivities which carried the first man over the divinely-drawn boundary line, are precisely the same movements and proclivities which from then until now have been the spring of all wilful sin.'? We firmly believe that, on the whole, man is as capable of doing his Creator's bidding to-day as at any epoch of his existence, when he comes to know what God requires.

The legal disabilities under which man groans are universal; sin has reigned unto death; and by one man sin entered. But the physical disadvantages are not of universal application. Millions live, flourish, and die, with all the organic soundness and pleasure of life which can be derived from a corruptible nature, and it should not be forgotten that corruptibility was as true of man before sin as after it. Mortality is the specific effect of the law of a corruptible organisation; but decay and dissolution are the necessary results, at some time, however remote, of all corruptible things.

As to whether the gospel can be understood, believed, and obeyed, without this mysterious mover, is easy of decision. It was obeyed of old, long before its disciples, in one recorded instance, had any idea of the intended effusion of the Spirit, (see Acts 19:2) . From the account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, we gather that the Spirit fell on them after the exposition of the Word, but before their obedience in baptism.

It is written that faith comes by hearing; it is the mental realization of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen. This mental realization comes from a clear knowledge of things promised; the conviction is the consequence of their settled belief. The things promised are described nowhere except in the Word of God; the necessary realization and conviction must, therefore, arise from the perusal of the Word, the only requisites for which are the desire, ability, and time to do so.

There is another kind of faith: but that is really a miraculous gift; we mean faith which can remove mountains. This is not the faith of the gospel which is set before us for obedience unto eternal life. It appears to us that the notion of the Holy Ghost assisting sinful flesh is but an example of how one error springs from another, and that it is therefore, most important that we should thoroughly examine the first premises of our belief.

The Seed of the Serpent

Reference is here made to the animal in Eden which is said to have conversed with Eve; the which, as elsewhere stated, we deem symbolic; the phrase, "the seed of the serpent," is undoubtedly to be taken in a figurative sense. The serpent stands for the father of all the disobedient, or rather for all who are involved in the disobedience of the first man. Those who are "born again," being adopted into the family of God through Christ, are not henceforth the serpent's seed, but the seed of Him by whom they are thus begotten to newness of life: in a word, they are the seed of God.

On this question no asseveration has been made which, to our mind, is more repugnant than that "Jesus Christ was the seed of the serpent." Adam became the seed of the serpent when, at the instigation of his wife, he tasted the forbidden fruit. He was then the offspring of the principle inculcated to Eve by her own "lust," or unlawful desire, and imaged by that beast which was pronounced more subtle than all the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made. But this legal degradation did not poison Adam's blood; it did not necessitate that all his children should be physically or morally debased. Abel and Cain were brothers, yet how dissimilar their characters. Murderers do not inevitably beget murderers, nor thieves, thieves; but it is probable that the child of an habitual thief will become a thief through example.

The consequences of allowing the first transgression to corrupt the moral and physical nature of man, and still to hold him amenable to all the decrees of God, present the Deity as unreasonable and cruel. If the moral nature became depraved, lowered from its original standard, man is deprived of the powers needful, on his part, for reinstatement in favour with God. It were enough for this primal breach of the peace between heaven and earth, that it should be followed by such penalties as could be removed at any time, by the application of redeeming power. But when we consider the nature of that power, it was evidently not designed to operate a return to the physical conditions supposed to have been lost, but to remove, first, all legal disabilities contracted; and, second, to produce, not the imaginary original nature, but an entirely new and superior being. What Adam was to the serpent's doctrine, namely, a serf, all mankind are to Adam, apart from their individual wills. But in neither case has poison contaminated the blood. Yet, this is a doctrine that has found as wide a currency as the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; it is, in fact, an "orthodox" notion, an article of sectarian creeds. A certain writer, who died in the early 1870's, has some lines in which he depicts this depressing and injurious idea:

The heart's a black pollution;
Pest is in the breath;
Each limb's a dark conspirator,
Compassing our death;

The mind's a moral ulcer;
The veins with venom roll;
And life is one great treason
Of sense against the soul.

The seed of the serpent, germinating in all the thoughts and actions of man, is the most convenient excuse for his short comings. But though the tongue may charge them ail to that account, the conscience smites and stings with the conviction that they might, if we would, have been avoided. It is in such a dogma ' that pious canting hypocrisy finds a grateful refuge, and boasts salvation sure according to the measure of the acknowledgement of its innate and helpless depravity.

But while the natural sense of right condemns this doctrine the contemptibleness of it becomes more and more manifest by analytical examination.

Assuming, then, that some dire poison, called sin, venomed all humanity, and debased them morally and physically, we have to inquire what it is they are compelled to do which is bad, and what it is they cannot perform which is good? Cannot a man refuse to lie, to swear, to get drunk, to commit adultery, to speak evil, to backbite, to give short weight, to sell a bad article, to deceive, to be idle, to incur debts, to be extravagant, to be a glutton, to be a brawler? In all matters of which our laws can take cognisance, nobody is ridiculous enough to contend that what is right cannot be adhered to. It is when we enter the domain of piety that our inborn feebleness, nay, helplessness, is thought to be discovered. Well, then, what is it that man can and cannot do? Can he not read his Bible: is it impossible to understand its general drift; can he not obey its

first requirements; does anything bar him from the practice of devotion; is it impossible to increase in knowledge; can he not refrain from being hasty, and practice patience; does anything hinder prayer; nay, is there a single thing commanded of his Creator that this poor poisoned creature cannot do, or cannot avoid? Reader, to discover such thy search will be in vain.

The application of the precious blood of Christ for the washing away of sin is not material, but figurative; there is no actual washing; the heart is said to be sprinkled by faith. Even immersion in water is not intended to effect a literal purification of the flesh, but to bring back the answer of a good, or enlightened conscience, towards God, as the gracious result of an act of obedience commanded by Him. This idea of fixed poison, or serpent's seed, cannot be too vigorously exposed and emphatically denounced; it produces, as nearly as possible, what we may imagine the reality would be; it cripples all energy, paralyses all effort; it, in effect, blasphemes the goodness of God, impugns His wisdom, and turns His mercy into gall; while the creature of His hand is changed to a prone puppet, and lashed for his inevitable movements. The impression magnetises the man into the very obliquity he deplures, and evokes the tears and lamentations of a hypocrite. Awake, thou charmed sleeper, and Christ shall give thee light!

The Woman's Seed

Seed stands for that which is begotten, as well as for seed properly so called. Hence, "the chosen seed;" "except the Lord of Sabaoth had given us seed," and similar expressions.

The stress laid by Scripture on the fact that Christ was "made of a woman," is intended to exclude the idea of human paternity, but not of all paternity. It bars off the natural in order to prepare our minds for the divine. It implies the appointment of "another seed" outside the male line: "that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit." This "holy thing," begotten by God, may be properly called God's seed, and this seed being born of Mary, is also her seed or son. "She brought forth her first born son," yet this child is called "the son of God."

There was no virtue in the woman that the Christ should proceed from her and not from man also; so that had it been requisite for Him to appear in what has been termed "unclean flesh," His being of the woman was of no advantage, for her flesh was like the flesh of the man. While, therefore, Jesus is called "her seed," we must look for another reason than that of identity of flesh in excluding the participation of the man in His production.

Nothing can be more evident, to one who calmly looks at this matter, than that the intervention of God was not designed to create an offspring whose flesh should differ from that of ordinary generation; but that He might be "in the likeness of sin's flesh" without being made sin's flesh in His birth. All we are "made sinners" in this way, or by this means; if, therefore, the promised seed was not a sinner by any means. He was clearly not an inheritor, as we are, of all or any of the consequences which flow from such a connection.

The woman's seed, or that which she conceived, had no relation to sin, or to sinners, except, first, in being made a sin offering; and, second, in partaking of the nature common to us all. And no doctrine is more insisted on by the Scripture than that of His necessary separation and stainlessness, in order that He might put away sin or, in figurative language, "bruise the serpent's head." But, if He were the serpent's seed, then the serpent bruises his own head, which falsifies the prediction assigning that work to the seed of the woman, and presents to us an unheard-of spectacle.

The elect are chosen from the world, or out of the seed of the serpent, but when the transfer has been made, they are no longer allied to their former brethren in sin. To use another scripture figure, they are translated from Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It will not be maintained that He is now under Satan; hence they, being His brethren, have already been delivered, but their perfection is a future work. Wild by nature, they have been grafted on to the true olive; they are not now a degenerate seed but a seed of Deity begotten by the word of truth. What they have become by adoption, their Elder Brother and Redeemer was by birth and obedience. By the mother He was related to them; by the Father separate from their fate in order that He might buy them off; to do this He gave Himself. We have no account of Christ being adopted; but we have all received the adoption of sons. Moses was faithful as a servant; but Christ as a Son over His

own house. God decreed Him to be His Son, that we, through Him, might receive the atonement; so that we are now no more servants or slaves, but sons, and can, like Christ, cry Abba, Father.

No son of Adam is perfectly righteous before God, though some are said to have been righteous, and to have walked in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless; nevertheless these noble exceptions were as much in bondage to sin, through Adam, as Judas himself; and their righteousness could never release them; they were at best but obedient slaves and needed one free-born to ransom them from the power of the grave.

All the seed of the serpent are under “the law of sin and death,” but the woman's seed are not under that law; for the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death. This “law of life” was always in Christ, there was never a point of time after His birth when it was not in Him; on the other hand, we have not a tittle of testimony that He was ever under the other law. This shows the relative positions of the two seeds, and makes it evident that those who say that Christ was the serpent's seed, neither understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm. From whatever defiled mankind Christ was free, whether it were law or individual deeds. Perfect obedience, on the basis of an undefiled existence, made resurrection unto eternal life sure; but obedience, on the basis of an existence defiled would, as regards a future life, be labour in vain. Hence, it is imperative to redeem mankind before they can begin, with any chance of success, the race for eternal life. Make the tree good and then its fruit will be good; let us see that the Father placed Christ in a position which rendered the accomplishment of His divine mission possible, and that we must accept God's way of righteousness; then it is easy to comprehend how, by holiness of conduct afterwards. He and we may gain the prize.

To make the Redeemer a slave, and get out of the consequent difficulty by saying that if God so decreed we ought to believe it, is to abandon the reason which God has given us wherewith to understand His purposes. God never wills what is contrary to justice and common sense tells us that such an idea is at once unjust and absurd.

The woman's seed is styled by Isaiah, (53:1,2), the seed of Jehovah, “To whom is the seed of Jehovah revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.” The Hebrew word is badly rendered her arm: the after words grow, plant, and root, show that it should be seed, not arm. It is the same word given in Genesis, where the seed in the ground is spoken of. The same letters, do mean arm, but not in such a connection as this in Isaiah. This was a holy seed, and when developed was called a holy thing.

In the “seed of Elohim,” (c.v., a godly seed) mentioned by Malachi in chapter 2:15, there is a probable allusion to Christ; as also in the “seed of Ail” spoken of in Hosea.

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To be continued