

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 176

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Editorial

Dear Sisters, Brethren and Friends, Loving Greetings.

In the King James Bible in 2 Corinthians 4, St. Paul writes, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed..." We can imagine Paul sitting at his table, perhaps in the evening after something to eat, and determining to write a letter of comfort and praise to the Corinthians, for his first epistle to them had contained some stinging rebukes concerning their behaviour and general shortcomings. His words are comfortable indeed and must have come as welcome balm to their battered souls, just as they do to ours when we read them centuries later.

William Tyndale renders the same verses like this, "We are troubled on every side, yet not without shift. We are in poverty: but not utterly without somewhat. We are persecuted: but not forsaken. We are cast down: nevertheless we perish not." These words must have held a particular resonance for Tyndale for he was well acquainted with poverty and persecution and trouble on every side, and he must often have felt cast down. When he says "yet are we not without shift" I wondered what the word could mean in this context. According to the dictionary the first meaning of 'shift' is the one we most regularly use 'to move from one place, position etc. to another.' But the second meaning is perhaps the one Tyndale had in mind 'to manage to get along or succeed.' He did much of his translation work and the studying for it in miserable conditions in prison, where he was unwell and cold and spending long hours in the dark. We owe to Tyndale, a brave and noble spirit, much of the translation of the Bible from the Hebrew. His careful and beautiful rendition has made the Bible a glorious jewel in the world of literature, as well as being above all the Word of God which contains the Good News of our redemption and forgiveness through Jesus Christ

William Barclay's translation of the same verses from Corinthians is also interesting and it points up to the modern ear that this letter from Paul is one which keeps in close relationship hopelessness and hope. "We are under pressure on every side: but never without a way out. We are at our wit's end but never at our hope's end. We are pursued by men but never abandoned by God. We are knocked down but never knocked out."

All of us experience in our life time at least one of the difficulties about which Paul writes so movingly. Even those in the secular world endure such tests. But to those whose hearts and minds are set on spiritual matters these tribulations could be said to be required experiences necessary for growth, and for

the development of character and faith. So if we are at anytime troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, under pressure, at our wit's end, pursued or knocked down, we know assuredly that many have suffered the same and much worse before us. We also know as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, that as Paul says later in the same epistle with his unwearied zeal and confidence... "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also... for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory..."

As Jesus said, "Look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh."

Love to all, Helen Brady

Why Me?

Yes, why me? Often asked by people when things go wrong; when some misfortune suddenly befalls us. The usual saying goes, "Why should this happen to me? What have I done to deserve this?"

But has it ever occurred to anybody to ask this same question when something has gone exceptionally well; when some unexpected blessing has come our way? Let us turn this question round and ask in a positive way, "Why should this blessing have come to me? Why me? What good have I done to deserve this?" I wonder how many ever asked this question when things have turned out well; and as for the second part, "What good have I done?" How many can answer this truthfully?

When we look back on our lives, we all had our ups and downs. But we all had one experience in our lives when we could truthfully ask this question, "Why me?" in a positive way. That was when God opened our minds to the great truth of the mission of Jesus Christ and we responded by accepting Him in baptism. As we have all learned, we were born in Adam, out of Christ, out of the commonwealth of Israel. It is entirely through God's mercy that some are called out, one here, one there. None of us know what good we have done more than our neighbour to bring upon ourselves this blessing, but here we are. It is up to us now to walk in the light of the Truth and hold fast to the end. So let me conclude with this practical proposition, next time we receive some unexpected blessing, or we experience a happy outcome of some dreaded event, let us not forget to thank God and ask "Why me?" in a positive way, "What have I done to deserve it?"

It is a little spiritual exercise worth trying. We won't come off the worse for it. It is worth a recommendation

Brother Leo Dreifuss

Excerpt from "The Temple" by Dr Edersheim under the heading of

Sacrifices: Their Order and Their Meaning

Symbolism of The Sacrifices. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbolical and typical. An outward observance without any real inward meaning is only a ceremony. But a rite which has a present spiritual meaning is a symbol; and if, besides, it also points to a future reality, conveying at the same time by anticipation, the blessing that is yet to appear, it is a type. Thus the Old Testament sacrifices were not only symbols, nor yet merely predictions by fact (as prophecy is a prediction by word), but they already conveyed to the believing Israelite the blessing that was to flow from the future reality to which they pointed. Hence the service of the letter and the work-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ran directly contrary to this hope of faith and spiritual view of sacrifices, which placed all on the level of sinners to be saved by the substitution of another, to whom they pointed. Afterwards, when the destruction of the Temple rendered its services impossible, another and most cogent reason was added for trying to substitute other things, such as prayers, fasts, etc., in room of the sacrifices. Therefore, although none of the older Rabbis has ventured on such an assertion as that of modern Judaism, the tendency must have been increasingly in that direction. In

fact, it had become a necessity - since to declare sacrifices of the essence of Judaism would have been to pronounce modern Judaism an impossibility. But thereby also the synagogue has given sentence against itself, and by disowning sacrifices has placed itself outside the pale of the Old Testament.

Sacrifices at the Centre of the Old Testament. Every unprejudiced reader of the Bible must feel that sacrifices constitute the centre of the Old Testament. Indeed, were this the place, we might argue from their universality that, along with the acknowledgement of a Divine power, the dim remembrance of a happy past and the hope of a happier future, sacrifices belonged to the primeval traditions which mankind inherited from Paradise. To sacrifice seems as natural to man as to pray; the one indicates what he feels about himself, the other what he feels about God. The one means a felt need for propitiation; the other a felt sense of dependence.

The Idea of Substitution. The fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament is that of substitution, which again seems to imply everything else - atonement and redemption, vicarious punishment and forgiveness. The firstfruits go for the whole products; the firstlings for the flock; the redemption-money for that which cannot be offered; and the life of the sacrifice, which is in its blood (Leviticus 17:11), for the life of the sacrificer. Hence also the strict prohibition to partake of the blood. Even in the 'Korban' gift (Mark 7:11) or free-will offering, it is still the gift for the giver. This idea of substitution, as introduced, adopted, and sanctioned by God Himself, is expressed by the sacrificial term rendered in our version 'atonement,' but which really means covering, the substitute in the acceptance of God taking the place of, and so covering, as it were, the person of the offerer. Hence the scriptural experience; "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered... unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalm 32:1,2); and perhaps also the scriptural prayer, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed." (Psalm 84:9). Such sacrifices, however, necessarily pointed to a mediatorial priesthood, through whom alike they and the purified worshippers should be brought near to God, and kept in fellowship with Him. Yet these priests themselves continually changed; their own persons and services needed purification, and their sacrifices required constant renewal, since, in the nature of it, such substitution could not be perfect. In short, all this was symbolical (of man's need, God's mercy, and His covenant), and typical, till He should come to whom it all pointed, and who had all along given reality to it; He whose Priesthood was perfect, and who on a perfect altar brought a perfect sacrifice, once for all - a perfect Substitute and a perfect Mediator. (Hebrews 10:1-24).

The Paschal Lamb. At the very threshold of the Mosaic dispensation stands the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb connected with the redemption of Israel, and which in many respects must be regarded as typical, or rather anticipatory, of all the others. But there was one sacrifice which, even under the Old Testament, required no renewal. It was when God had entered into covenant relationship with Israel, and Israel became the "people of God." Then Moses sprinkled "the blood of the covenant" on the altar and on the people (Exodus 24). On the ground of this covenant-sacrifice all others rested (Psalm 50:5). These were, then, either sacrifices of communion with God, or else intended to restore that communion when it had been disturbed or dimmed through sin and trespass: sacrifices in communion, or for communion with God. To the former class belong the burnt- and the peace-offerings; to the latter, the sin- and the trespass-offerings. But, as without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, every service and every worshipper had, so to speak, to be purified by blood, and the mediatorial agency of the priesthood called in to bring near unto God, and to convey the assurance of acceptance.

Letter to Brother and Sister Parry dated 28th October 1995 from a well known Christadelphian now residing in Tasmania.

Dear Phil and Rene, It is a disappointment to me that you are unable to accept the overwhelming evidence of the Greek and Hebrew inspired Scripture. All your reasoning seems to be based on human reasoning from the A.V. translation. I reject utterly your interpretation of Romans 6 as being not in conformity with what Paul is saying in that chapter. With regard to what you say about Joan's death, I feel the same about that as I did in a letter I wrote to someone in England about my mother's death - "We sorrow not, as others who have no hope," because of our conviction that there is a resurrection and that we will participate in it. Death is but a rest in sleep, with an assured awakening in the future, whether we have served him faithfully or not. We shall be raised for Judgment - being responsible, because of our knowledge

of the purpose of God. If we are rejected it will be because we are worthy of it. God is righteous. My sole reason for hoping I will be accepted is that I want to serve God, for His glory, in the eternal future.

You continually make reference to Peter Watkins, but as I think I have said before, I have no knowledge of what Peter wrote, apart from the few brief references, extracts you have picked out, which are too brief for me to judge, but in any case, I am not interested in what other people think. I have tried to pick up some of the points you are trying to make, but I really can't see what you mean about those that remain who do not die, but are changed at the coming of Christ from mortality to immortality. All Christadelphians believe that; P.Watkins believed that. It is very apparent to me from what you have written that when he says that we all die, he means that we will die in the normal course of events, excluding the return of Christ. Those then living who are to be saved will be changed. Your whole conception of the legal position of sin and death and its being waived by baptism, to me is way off beam. Baptism is a symbolic death to sin, a recognition that we are worthy of death because of sin, a recognition that God is just in causing us to die, the principle of the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," by which he was "justified rather than the other." Justified is 'accounted righteous,'

Forgiveness of sin does not necessarily remove the punishment for sin in this life. E.g. David - he said to Nathan, "He shall restore the lamb four-fold because he hath done this thing;" his four sons died. Also Absalom lay with father's wives, in accordance with the words of Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:11,12.

I cannot see the point of what you say about Robert Roberts forsaking the part of Scripture he and Dr Thomas believed and defended in 1869, or the difficulty he faced in the case of Enoch, and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18. Neither can I see any support in that for the substitutional death of Jesus.

You next go on to speak of Adam under law in Eden; the only law under which Adam was placed was that they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As I understand the doctrine of Original Sin, it is that we die for Adam's sin; this is not what Clause V says. We die as a result of Adam's sin, is what I have always understood, which is different and scripturally based, as I said in my previous letter - the partaking of the forbidden fruit caused some change in Adam - Genesis 2:22. It was a mental and moral change, which was passed on to his descendants causing us to have a bias toward sin. Adam died because he sinned; we, through that sin, have the law of sin in our members. We die because we sin - Romans 5:12, "Death passed upon all men because all have sinned."

Dr Thomas, in "Elpis Israel," translates (as Diaglott) "in whom all sinned" this is also in the A.V. margin, but it is incorrect, I see the 1970 edition of "Elpis Israel" has a note "This marginal reading of the A.V. cannot be sustained. The Revised Version has struck it out."

I don't know where you got your ideas from re David Handley. What you say is different from what I have read over the years, as I told you last time. I have just re-read what Islip Collyer says later about D. Handley and E.Turney in his book on R.Roberts, and this agrees with what I have always understood.

I don't know whether you have this book, printed in 1977? He says:-

"The first suggestion of new doctrine of which we have any knowledge was in a passage from the pen of David Handley published by R.Roberts in the magazine. Edward Turney and some others challenged part of it. The editor, who was not at all inclined to seek for heresy, declined to take the words in the sense suggested by the critics, and he pointed to parts of the article stating fundamental truths which, as it seemed to him, did not admit of such contrary meanings. It soon became evident however, that David Handley had a new idea regarding the atonement. It was discussed at tea tables, and there really seems no reason apart from personal clashes why it should not have been killed and buried at the same tables. When worked out as a complete theory it involved the return to the old theological idea of all men being held as personally responsible for Adam's sin..."

I will not spend time typing out the rest. You probably have already read it; but I will just say that in the next paragraph he says that with extraordinary suddenness this idea was taken up and worked out in detail by Edward Turney.

I will skip over the rest of page 2 of your letter and will just mention that in my opinion, Clause V is not the doctrine of Original Sin.

I know perfectly well the teachings of the Nazarene Fellowship, but you yourself do not seem able to reason logically, or to see the clear teaching of Scripture. You say that I myself am trying all ways to place Jesus in the position of needing redemption, but have not explained what He needed redemption from. It is a pity you are so blind that you cannot see that what I am doing is showing you what Scripture clearly teaches, that He did need redemption. You adopt the attitude of the fleshly mind - 'He didn't because there was nothing He needed redemption from.' Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts had the humility to accept the teaching of Scripture, and looked for the reason why He did need redemption and found the answer. It was for the same reason as the tabernacle and its contents needed atonement; because of His association with sinful human nature; because He was tempted in all points as we are, although He was sinless.

If Scripture says, as it does, "He was just and saved (Himself)" - A.V. "having salvation" - I accept that in some way He did need salvation. Zechariah 9:9

Also when it says (Hebrews 9:12) that it was "through his own blood he entered in once into the holy place having obtained (for himself) eternal redemption" I accept it, without asking why He needed redemption, why He needed salvation. Your sarcastic attitude is very apparent when in connection with this verse you comment on the wise Greeks in Australia. These are just ordinary Greek migrants, as I am an English migrant. They understand their own language which fixes this verse as applying to His own redemption.

You ask, 'what do your wise Greek Brethren teach about Hebrews 7:27?' This verse is easy when you understand Greek. I can answer that. Those words, "This he did once" can apply, in the Greek, in the singular or plural. Some apply it to mean "this (last) he did once." Some apply it to mean "(all) this he did once" (i.e. in one offering, by contrast with the day by day offerings, and the two offerings on the Day of Atonement).

John Carter, in his book on Hebrews, mentions this grammatical variation (page 81 in my copy) giving the opinion of two eminent scholars, commenting on that verse, giving two different opinions. Jesus offered for Himself and us in that one offering, hence Hebrews 9:12, "through his own blood he entered in once into the holy place having obtained (for himself) eternal redemption."

The point of Hebrews 7:27 is that whereas the priests under the law needed to offer repeatedly, He did all that in one offering when He offered up Himself.

What you quote from Dr Thomas in "Eureka" is read by nearly all our brethren and sisters as we have regular "Elpis Israel" and "Eureka" classes. (E.I. classes every alternate Friday evening, and Eureka, every Sunday morning as an adult class as part of our Sunday School) (We have only recently restarted Vol. 1 and have reached page 30). This is apart from our weekly Bible Class. I sometimes feel that Dr Thomas is held too highly in Australia. However, I feel you misapply what he said. Jesus was born subject to sin, although having done no sin; and He was in the position of Leviticus 25:49, able to redeem Himself.

You ask how could Jesus say to His disciples that their redemption was drawing nigh, knowing that at that time they would already have been redeemed by His blood?

The answer is that although He died that we might be redeemed, we are not yet redeemed; our redemption is not until we have been judged worthy (Ephesians 4:30; Romans 8:23). He has already obtained eternal redemption, it is ours only in prospect. He has paid the price of our redemption by His perfect life and His sacrifice; we have hope of redemption through our obedience and submission to the will of God. It is not Christadelphian teaching that Jesus was alienated from His Father. The Bible gives only two causes of alienation - ignorance, and wicked works; to me this has nothing to do with His redemption. We need redemption even if we have done no evil because of those thoughts which come into our mind causing us to be tempted; even if we do not give way to temptation. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, although He did no sin. For that reason He also needed redemption.

The words “your redemption draweth nigh” apply to His second coming. Luke 21:8-24 applies to the fall of Jerusalem and judgment of the Jewish nation by means of the Roman armies. Verses 25-34 I believe applies to the present time - more than to their day, although of course, there are parallels between AD 70 and His second coming.

I know, as you say, that redemption applies in most cases, to purchase; but you seem to apply this figure of speech too narrowly and literally, compared with Paul’s use of it. I reject as not in accordance with Scripture, your understanding of Jesus suffering on the Cross the judicial death due to Adam. To me this is absolute nonsense. As I have told you previously the animal sacrifices never died instead of the offerer. The lamb providing the covering for Adam did not die instead of Adam. As for Jesus and bondage to sin, He had that same capacity for sin that we have, and for this reason needed atonement. I will give you a few Scriptures which to me are conclusive - Romans 6:6-10; the whole is connected with us being baptized into Christ and having thereby been baptized into His death and being dead should be dead to sin, and he walking in newness of life. Verse 9 says that Christ, being raised from the dead, death no longer has dominion over Him. It is the next two verses we particularly want to notice - “in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“He died unto sin” cannot mean “He died for our sin,” as I have heard it explained. When He died He was dead to sin - no longer subject to temptation, so we have to subject our lives to God as though we were no longer tempted. As though we were dead. That appears to be the line of reasoning. He needed to die unto sin as we need to die unto sin.

The principle point I am trying to emphasize is that when He died He died to sin, or as one translator says, “He died by sin.” He had within Him that sin (which He entirely suppressed, of course, but it was there), therefore He needed redemption; death no longer having dominion.

2 Corinthians 5:21 is another verse which is often distorted. There it says that God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin for us. This is often twisted to say He was made a sin offering (as Diaglott) for us, without justification. But it means what it says - He was made sin for us; made subject to the same temptations in order to be an atonement for us, but because He lived a perfect life He was redeemed from death.

Hebrews 9:28. We really need to read the preceding verses as well, but I will limit this typing to the last verse, “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” There are some who try to make “sin” here into “sin offering,” (e.g. Diaglott) not realising the stupidity of such an interpretation.

What this means is that He will no longer be subject to temptation, He will no longer have that effort of controlling His own will; His own natural desires - “Not my will but thine be done.”.....

* * *

NOTE: The above is about half of the letter sent to Brother Phil Parry but we feel sufficient has been printed for the reader to gather the gist of the whole. - Editor.

In Response Brother Phil Parry makes the following comments:-

This letter is too lengthy for me to comment on in every detail so I must restrict it to the most important points which matter.

I was a member of the same Ecclesia as the writer for around 17 years and I do not remember any other Bible than the King James A. V. being used in all that time or any criticism of it by the writer or that he possessed the overwhelming evidence of the Greek and Hebrew inspired Scripture.

My interpretation and understanding of what Paul is teaching in Romans 6 is that if we are truly in Christ through belief in His sacrificial death and His resurrection, and have confirmed it by a Baptism of symbolic death into His, then we have died unto Sin as a Master, and are no longer his servants but are serving a new Master in the newness of life granted by the grace of God. For the wages of Master Sin is death for services rendered, but now being, dead to him we can no longer serve him as a master, but are become servants of God (Romans 6:16-18, 20,23). Paul confirms this in chapter 6 verses 1-13; reminding the believers that they had by the disobedience of Adam been born under Sin unto whom, as personified, he had sold all in his loins.

You will note my friend does not agree with me on this, but he gives no explanation of his own view. Rather, in connection with his deceased wife, and also the death of his mother quite a number of years before, he states that both were only asleep awaiting the resurrection at the return of Jesus and appear before His judgment seat having served him faithfully or not.

I was quite aware of what was his mother's conviction and of her sincerity and hope, but what was quoted at her burial at which I was present, were the words of the Apostle Paul from Romans chapter 6 and were directed at the deceased in the context of what the Christadelphian minister believed to be the case with all his community namely that this common death was the wages of sin and implied in this case that this sincere lady had served sin and was receiving the wages due to her. I made it clear to my friend that in the context of the minister's understanding and obsession of sin in the flesh and tendency and bias to commit sin, he had consigned his mother to oblivion.

The fact that my friend believes baptism alters this is not the case especially as Christadelphians believe redemption is prospective and not a present position and Relationship to God.

I know that my friend's mother and his own wife had regarded themselves as having served God faithfully and baptism into Christ should have put them into this position of serving the new Master by dying unto the old, but on the basis of Christadelphian teaching that condemnation is in the physical flesh up to the time of the experience of the physical common death, then my reasoning from Romans 6 is far removed from that of my friend and general Christadelphian understanding. He calls it human reasoning on my part, a strange statement considering that Dr Thomas said of those true believers baptized into Christ, had "passed from under a sentence of death to a sentence of life" (Eureka), also that "Redemption is release for a ransom, all who become God's servants have been released from a former Lord by purchase, the Purchaser is God and the ransom paid, the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot and without blemish," quoted from the same source. I endorse and believe this emphatically and am not alone; it is spiritual and logical reasoning, which Paul used to teach the message of the gospel of salvation from alienation and the Death by Sin.

If as my friend insists, this is all out of conformity with what Paul is saying in the chapter, he should have told me what his own views were, seeing that Dr Thomas' views were in harmony with mine in this matter of servants as taught by Paul.

Incidentally, I want to serve God now, as well as in eternity, so my friend should take note that he must first leave the service of Sin now, or as Paul says, he cannot be a servant of God now or in eternity.

If he believes and as others of his community have told me, that redemption is a future prospect applicable only to the physical body at the coming of Christ, what has baptism done for them, or what was its purpose? Does it amount to no more than the Church of England's practice of Christening and later Confirmation? It appears so. Was Dr. Thomas also wrong about present release and purchase?

My friend speaks of my continual reference to Peter Watkins and his booklet "The Cross Of Christ" but admits he has no knowledge of what Peter Watkins said in the book, then he goes on to tell me what Peter Watkins meant when in fact he has no knowledge of what Peter wrote.

I must say the Nazarenes seldom send out booklets and literature to Christadelphians and the general public without knowing what they contain, and if any misprint or statement needs correcting through some misunderstanding this is usually pointed out and rectified. Coming now to the matter of what Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts believed in 1869 and which I told my friend they rejected later on; he says he cannot

understand what I mean. To be brief, they rejected David Handley's request for baptism - on the grounds that Adam's nature was changed after he sinned. A similar view to that compiled in Clause 5 of the B.A.S.F. Both Dr Thomas and R.Roberts said there was no physical change whatever, only a change in Adam's relationship to God - he was in need of redemption and forgiveness. Since 1873, Christadelphians have accepted the view of David Handley as handed down from the Apostate Church of Rome, and enjoined upon them by R.Roberts as a doctrine to be received, simply because Edward Turney could see the fallacy of such a doctrine, especially when compared with Clause 4.

My reference to those alive and remaining unto the coming of the Lord was due to Peter Watkins stating that the penalty of death (his belief, the common death) stands and all must die, and my linking this with what R.Roberts wrote in "The Visible Hand of God" on the same subject, i.e., "How did Enoch escape this penalty?" Robert Roberts overcomes the difficulty by resorting to the Nazarene view of the sacrifice of Christ foreshadowed in the sin-covering of Adam in Eden where Enoch associated his own sin-covering in the sacrifice he must have offered through shedding of its blood as a substitute, signifying his redemption from the death passed upon all men in the legal and federal sense as taught by Paul in Romans 5. Those alive and faithful at the coming of Christ will have in a similar way, associated themselves with the anti-typical Lamb's sacrifice, the very substance Jesus Himself, by symbolic death into His inflicted sacrificial death. Therefore they have been released from the death that came through Adam's sin, and on account of being changed to spirit nature, they do not experience the common death which never did pass upon all men. See B.A.S.F. Clause 4.

If my friend could not understand the deceitfulness of this crafty move to our view of the substitutionary death of Jesus on this subject of Enoch and those mentioned alive at Christ's coming (3 Thessalonians 4:17) then he must be blind.

In his fifth paragraph my friend makes the most contradictory statements imaginable of one who professes an understanding of the Holy Scriptures. He proceeds thus:

"As I understand the doctrine of Original Sin, it is that we die for Adam's sin; this is not what Clause 5 says. We die as a result of Adam's, is what I have always understood which is different, and scripturally based... It was a mental and moral change, which was passed on to his descendants, causing us to have a bias toward sin; - Adam died because he sinned; we through that sin, have the law of sin in our members. We die because we sin - Romans 5:12. "Death passed upon all men, because all have sinned."

I will now analyse these statements:

1) Original Sin - "We die for Adam's sin"? Nonsense. Jesus died for Adam's sin. We do not die for it; we die because we inherit the same corruptible decaying nature of a limited period.

2) Agreed, this is not what Clause 5 says. Clause 5 says we die because Adam's nature was changed (from a nature of corruptibility to a nature of the same substance, which left to itself as God made him - Dr Thomas - would have died and returned to the ground). Also that this sentence defiled Adam's nature and became a physical law of his being transmittable to his descendants." We are bound to accept that this must have been an act of God, if true, or we must accept my friend's doctrine of evolution, where he says, "It was a mental and moral change which was passed on to his descendants, causing us to have a bias toward sin." I cannot conceive of a Just God infusing the nature of Adam with a bias toward disobedience after having sinned, or of causing this bias to be transmitted to Adam's descendants when we understand obedience rather than disobedience to be pleasing to God.

He continues:

"The partaking of the forbidden fruit caused some change in Adam - Genesis 2:22. It was a mental and moral change... we through that sin have the law of sin in our members. We die because we sin - Romans 5:12. Death passed upon all men, because all have sinned."

Does he find this teaching in Genesis? No, he cannot support Clause 5 nor his own misconstrued ideas from Paul's letter to Romans which is way out of the context of Paul's reasoning. What he is stating is

exactly the doctrine of Original Sin taught by the Roman Catholic and Church of England, that we are born with a compulsive bias to commit sin; this is not Paul's teaching at all. Paul admits that through Adam he had been sold by Adam to another master and had been serving that master in his ignorance, but through Christ he had been delivered from, or made free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2

When does my friend think Death passed upon all men? Was it when Adam sinned, or was it when they were born? If the latter, how can a new-born baby be convicted of sin? And if death passed upon all men because they alt sinned, how could this be if they had no knowledge of the law, for where no law is there is no transgression?

Firstly, my friend says of Clause 5

"We die as a result of Adam's sin which is what I have always understood, which is different from Original Sin doctrine, and scripturally based."

Then he destroys his theory and adds another theory saying "We die because we sin," quoting Romans 5:12 out of context,

But what does surface reading of the Scripture matter to Christadelphians if they appear to prove what they falsely contend for?

When we consider how sin entered into the world and Death by Sin, we find it to be a matter of law, and this is how Paul is demonstrating it in his Epistle to the Romans, and stating how God viewed the situation in Eden and appointed a way of reconciliation through the death of His Son for those who were in Adam's loins; not personal sinners - but constituted sinners that by His Grace they by faith might be constituted righteous, without works - Romans 5:15-21.

Shall we accept Paul's interpretation of the legal and moral position brought about by Adam and the way out through Redemption in Christ? Or would Christadelphians prefer this mess of pottage of evolution and Darwinism? For this is what it amount's to.

I will proceed no further with my comments other than to say I am appalled by what my friend says about the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the meaning of the offerings, etc., and of Jesus needing redemption and salvation Himself because He could be tempted. I don't mind what he has said detrimental to myself, but I do feel a righteous anger at what he says about my Lord and Master who loved me and gave Himself for me as The Prince of Life before being nailed to the Tree.

If being capable of temptation requires redemption, then Adam was in need of redemption at his creation. Where is any sense or reason in thinking this way of Jesus?

Brother Phil Parry.

Some Seed Fell On Good Ground

It occurred to me on reading chapter 4 of Mark's gospel record and the Parable of the Sower and others, that the Lord Jesus was here introducing a new and dispensational view of the Kingdom of God. He was starting to "build His ecclesia." - Matthew 16:18.

In Mark 4:1 Jesus is speaking to the multitude, part of the ground on which His 'seed' was to be 'sown.' He is in a boat on the shimmering sea. Although barley and wheat were sown in November after the early rains in the agricultural year there is here nothing to indicate that it was November. Chapter 2, verse 23, green fields point to the dry season in April - May - the ripening wheat. This extended to October. But in chapter 6, verse 39 and John 6:10 "there was much grass" and it was green. Although the dry season,

it was not yet the time of the early rains, nor was it entirely without rain. The day was dry, probably pleasantly warm, the multitudes were out following Him for His fame had spread.

The National Kingdom

Following their escape from Egypt with Moses at their head, Israel had received the Law and was constituted a kingdom of Priests and an holy nation - Exodus 20.

Many years later they acquired a king and made Jerusalem their capital city. After the reign of King Solomon the kingdom divided and went into spiritual decline after which the separated kingdoms went into captivity and exile, first, northern Israel into Assyria, then southern Judah into Babylon. After seventy years, upwards of 42,000 returned from Babylon and these eventually came under Roman domination and were actually in expectation of a Messiah to deliver them militarily and this was the situation when Jesus came upon the scene.

But that was not the time for their kingdom to be restored to them. It was the time for His great sacrifice. It was not the time for their restoration, Acts 1:6. They were to reject their King, and long captivity and dispersion was to result, as we know.

An interesting thought here is that He came in “due time.” What is ‘due time’ - Romans 5:6?

The original promise included the blessing of “all the families of the earth” – Genesis 12:3; Acts 3:25. In fairness to Israel, chosen for Abraham’s sake (Genesis 26:24), God would not bless the nations while Israel were adjudged faithful. But when they stumbled it was through their fall salvation was offered to the Gentiles:

“Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness” - Romans 11. 12 N.K.J.

So it had to be “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” or Gentile - Romans 2:9,10. Justice with compassion.

It was this factor, Israel’s fall and Gentile salvation that made it due time for Christ to come, plus the fact that seventy weeks or 490 years were to elapse from the decree of Artaxerxes “on the first day of Nisan in the twelfth year of his reign, which was exactly 490 years to the crucifixion. (“Elpis Israel” page 394). It was due time, for when we, Jew and Gentile, were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” - Romans 5:6. “Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” - 3 Timothy 2:6 - “and in due time manifested His word through preaching.” - Titus 1:3.

This was the broad picture, and the work was just beginning when Jesus spoke those words of Mark 4:3; “Listen! Behold, a Sower went out to sow...” Personal salvation, not national salvation is now the keynote. National salvation does indeed come in the fullness of time, for when Paul asks, “Has God cast away His People?” the answer was, “God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.” - Romans 11:1,2.

Preparing The Kingdom Of The Future

It was to be on the basis of selectivity. The Kingdom was “at hand” in that sense. “The time is fulfilled... Repent, and believe the Gospel” - Mark 1:15.

His Ecclesia, or calling out, was to be on the basis of individual fitness as far as possible. His word in some cases fell upon deaf ears, it “fell by the wayside;” or it fell “on stony ground, where it did not have much earth,” upon people who had little depth or interest, who flourished and died and melted away. “Some fell among thorns” which choked it, so they failed to respond with enthusiasm and yielded no crop. Their friends meant more to them, or they had too many irrelevant interests; they died on the vine so to speak.

But of the seed that fell upon the good, or better ground, all were satisfactory even though their output could not equal the best in all cases; “None of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other” - this to the Corinthians, “for who makes you differ from another?” 1 Corinthians 4:6,7.

This approach proved somewhat beyond His immediate acquaintance and He proceeds to explain the “mystery,” or secret now being revealed, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and “circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” – Romans 2:28.29; Mark 4:10-20.

The parable of the Growing Seed in verses 26 to 29 indicates the passage of time that is taken for the Kingdom to be manifested in its fullness, “because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed in verses 30 to 32 illustrates in few words what great things spring from small beginnings in the matter of the Kingdom of God.

However they all had to brave the elements in order to do the work, and the Lord’s final message is “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” – verses 35 to 41.

In the end they did not fail.

Brother Stanley Jelfs.

Letter from a reader of our booklet, “Why The Cross?”

Dear Brother Gregory and Brother Parry, Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ-

I received your booklet on “The Netherton Debate.” A very typical document from those “who sow discord among brothers” (Proverbs 6; 19) and would make “a brother an offender for a word,” you are debating technicalities. A high percentage of Christadelphians of all branches and colours are technocrats. Fortunately we have learnt a great deal about tolerance since 1958 and have become to realize that at the judgment seat the Lord will not have a copy of Central, Dawn, Berean or Nazarene Statements of Faith and tick us off according to which of those Statements is the one the Lord had published in Heaven ready for His return.

In Galatians 5:20 you and the leaders of all the other splits are mentioned, R.S.V. strife, dissension and party spirit. These are in the same category as fornication. Therefore I would suggest that if you continue your divisive path according to Paul’s warning, “Those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom” (verse 21), holding to dogma is always dangerous. The Roman Catholic Church is an example of this.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4, Paul tells us that “Love does not insist on its own way.” Your interpretation of this particular aspect of the Gospel is interesting and some parts I accept, other parts I would reject. I have heard all the different arguments on the Atonement, the nature of Christ and the nature of Adam. In my 49 years as a Christadelphian and at present we all agree to differ and world wide we are growing because we obey Christ’s commandments as recorded in John’s Gospel - “A new commandment I give unto you, to love one another.” There is never a winner in a debate. All it does is effectively open ones eyes to different points of view. In general you seem to believe Christadelphian doctrine. So why get bogged down with certain aspects of doctrine? “True religion and undefiled before God is to visit the fatherless, and the widow in their affliction and be unspotted from the world.” True religion is not being bogged down with dogma as you are.

Why don’t you spend this time and money wasted on this debate and go out into all the world and preach the Gospel as the Central Fellowship have been doing to great effect in the last 40 or 50 years. You could have sent the money for this booklet and postage to the C.B.M. They could put it good use in places like Africa.

Your Brother in Christ, Edward Fletcher.

First reply:-

Dear Brother Fletcher, Greetings with Love in Jesus Christ. I appreciate the sincerity and restraint with which you write and wish to respond in like manner.

From your letter it seems as if you may have seen a copy of the Netherton Debate although all I sent you was our booklet containing the opening speech, with an invitation to request a verbatim copy of the complete report.

Not all Christadelphians learnt tolerance since 1958; at Erdington divisions increased within the Ecclesia as a result of the Re-union with the result that I was eventually turned out for asking awkward questions to which I received no answers. But that is water under the bridge now. What you say about Central, Dawn, Berean and Nazarene Fellowship Statements of Faith is noteworthy because not since Edward Turney wrote his booklet “The Sacrifice of Christ” in 1873 to the present day has a Statement of Faith been drawn up by the Nazarene Fellowship. The reason being that all Statements of Faith are inherently evil because they are divisive, depending on man’s interpretation and therefore dogma.

‘The Statement of Faith published in heaven’ is the Holy Bible and on the back cover of every Nazarene Fellowship booklet published in the last fifteen years attention is drawn to the fact that we have no Statement of Faith outside the pages of the Bible.

It is because of the false claims made in the B.A.S.F. that the Nazarene Fellowship is so vociferous; the most simple and obvious mistake is made in Clause 25 which convicts Jesus Christ of being a liar for saying “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power...” (Revelation 20:6). Clause 12 says that God murdered His own Son with His own wicked hands!, while Clause 5 is far reaching in its teaching of the doctrine of Original Sin; this clause being a re-write of one the Church of England’s Thirty-nine Articles.

I am sorry if these points are new to you because it comes as a great shock to realize these are the things people are expected to believe as Christadelphians. However, these teachings are not pointed out to candidates for baptism and while we are sure of God’s mercy to those who remain in ignorance of such teachings, we feel a responsibility to oppose those leaders who insist that everything in the B.A.S.F. is to be accepted as true. Some of it is blasphemous.

This cannot be the way to worship God in Spirit and in truth, surely?

Is false doctrine a small matter which God should overlook? Will God overlook wrong teaching and accept us for our good works? Are we saved by good works? By faith are we saved; not by works. Are we saved by faith in false doctrines? God forbid! God is true, though all men be liars.

Your reference to Galatians 5:20 is duly noted and if we were in anyway causing people to split away from the truth of Scripture teaching we would indeed be carnally minded, but we are encouraged by Paul’s words in Acts 24:13 to 16 which could so easily be paraphrased to support our preaching among the Christadelphian community.

What was new about Christ’s commandment to love one another was that we should turn the other cheek, go the extra mile and give our cloak also; He did all these things for us in one way or another in His Atoning work. This is our aim in our endeavour to open people’s eyes to the Love of God and Jesus Christ in the true understanding of the Atonement.

We see the Christadelphian community as being “fatherless” and “widowed” and pray that one here and one there may yet see and understand the Gospel.

We would not of course help the Christadelphian Bible Mission (C.B.M.) to “encompass sea and land to make one proselyte...” (Matthew 23:15), but would spread the Gospel message by the grace of God as He enables us.

Therefore we preach Christ crucified and would know only this among you that Jesus Christ died in place of (Greek *anti* = in the room of - as in Matthew 2:22; and *huper* = in stead of - as in 2 Corinthians 5:20 and Philemon 13) Adam; the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ being the Ransom price paid for our purchase giving us redemption as a present possession.

Regarding the Atoning work of Jesus Christ, God said "Come now and let us reason together..." and Jesus Christ said, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you, ask and it shall be given you." Again we are told to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. Also Jesus Christ said "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father shall know the doctrine..." Therefore we have confidence in God that with regard to the Atonement there is no need to differ in our understanding, and having proved all things we hold fast that which is good.

We care little for what we suffer in attacks which impugn our characters so long as we can worship and serve our Creator in Spirit and in truth and spread the Good News to all who will hear and accept. This is our joy and song in the night.

Trusting you are of like precious faith,

I am your Brother in Christ, Russell Gregory

* * *

Second reply:

Dear Brother and Sister Fletcher, "Sowing discord among brethren"? I experienced much discord of doctrine from a Christadelphian member and lecturer in my younger days as a member. He was my tutor but I found his teaching was that of the confused writing of Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts, which in both cases amounted to condemned flesh instead of condemnation of sin. Also that Jesus was unclean from birth, being born of a woman and died for that reason - to show God's displeasure of what He had created. Yes, this is the Christadelphian doctrine, a defiance and rejection of Gabriel's message to Mary "That Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called The Son of God." Can any approach God through a legally unclean position?

I was ignorant at the time of the so-called Clean Flesh doctrine, and of the Turney challenge to R.Roberts which the latter failed to accept, yet he was the very one who sowed discordant doctrine, for example Clauses V and XII of the B.A.S.F.

I continued to challenge my tutor on his blasphemous statements concerning Jesus the Son of God which was continuous repetition mainly of the erroneous views of Robert Roberts which you consider to be "technicalities"? Were the views of Nadab and Abihu technicalities? Did not God demonstrate that the minds and actions of Nadab and Abihu were not mere technicalities to be ignored? Did not God declare at the time "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified"? How then could a condemned unclean Christ of the line of David and Abraham approach unto God and even address Him as His Father? "He was raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David," Clause VIII. Can you explain this?

I came to the Nazarene views, not through their literature; I had received none whatever or known of them, but through challenging at Bible Class the discordant teaching of my tutor, now deceased, and as a result on locating a member of the Nazarene Fellowship I and my wife confirmed our belief of their teaching and we resigned and were re-immersed into the Atoning death of Christ - never preached nor understood by Christadelphians; and the true reasons for our resignations, as the case with the majority, never given in the Christadelphian magazine.

This is just a brief answer to your letter for the moment due to my sight. I am to have a cataract removal in two days time but hope to write more at a future date.

We remain Yours in the Service of the Master, Phil and Rene Parry.

Letter to the Editor of the Christadelphian Magazine, date 20th March 1999

Dear Brother Ashton, I have been reading your editorial in The Christadelphian magazine for March 1999 and was pleased to find it contains many sound observations and excellent advice for studying Scripture. For example you say,

“We could not, therefore, understand the gospel records properly if we did not know Genesis.” “So important are the first pages of the Bible that a wrong understanding of their teaching has serious and potentially calamitous consequences.” “The only way properly to understand the message of Genesis is to be guided by the other inspired Scriptures which comment upon it. Any other approach is fraught with difficulties, especially one which depends on what the Scriptures do not say, or on what they may infer. All the major Biblical doctrines are clearly and positively revealed in its pages” “We should note carefully what we are told.”

All this is good common sense and commendable counsel so it grieves me to find you fail to keep to your own recommendations while, sadly, the most important advice of all is not mentioned - the necessity for prayerful study.

You say, “Obedience was harder for him (Adam) as a dying creature than it was in his condition before the fall.” What presumption! You want this to be true for the purpose of building your argument while your attempt to prove the point by saying it is “because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” is no proof whatever. There is no indication or reason given in Scripture that it was harder to remain sinless after the fall than before. Let us suppose for a moment that you are right, who made it harder? The answer of course has to be that God made it harder? But why? We have no satisfactory answer.

You claim “the serpent was given the power to speak” If so then it must also have been given the ability to reason. Is this true? Only God could have given the serpent these powers but for what good purpose? You have the problem of James 1:13,14, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” It follows that you misunderstand Scripture.

Why make meaningless statements? Here is one -

“Access to the tree would only prolong the inevitable conclusion.”

Here is another -

“What is implied in Genesis is thus stated explicitly by the Apostle Paul: before man sinned, death was not experienced by the human creation.”

As there were only Adam and Eve at this time it is hardly surprising. All you are telling us is that neither of them had died before partaking of the forbidden fruit. Surely it is a forgone conclusion that they were both alive at the time. But perhaps you meant us to bear in mind your next sentence where you go on to say -

“Adam was not created a dying creature: for the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul.”

Here we begin to see your line of reasoning that because Adam was not made a dying creature but was made a living creature he would have gone on living. This is your novel way of introducing sin into the flesh as a fixed principle. Has it not occurred to you that dying creatures are living creatures and living creatures are dying creatures and this is how they are until they die; then they are no longer dying creatures nor living creatures but dead creatures? Making this artificial distinction between living and dying creatures is weaving yet more nonsense into the tangled web of Christadelphian teaching. Neither did you come by this notion from a study of Scripture.

You write,

"Genesis... goes on to reveal that when Adam and Eve chose to follow earthly thinking they became sinful dying creatures."

Whatever is earthly thinking? When Adam and Eve were doing as God had instructed in keeping and dressing the garden did not this require earthly thinking? Did their resting and leisure time not involve earthly thinking? Was not their conversation regarding their shared joys and companionship earthly thinking? When enjoying life in the garden did not they naturally think and consider earthly things? After they transgressed they were fearful and apprehensive, would you say that this was earthly thinking?

Besides all this, prior to their transgression they were living sinless creatures. Which was Jesus Christ, a living sinless creature or a dying sinful creature? How you tie knots into the web!

The Bible account does not tell us there is sin in the flesh nor does it infer any distinction between living and dying creatures in the way you use it. You have been unable to show clearly nor positively from Scripture that there was any change in Adam and Eve's physical make up after they sinned, so what is the point in trying to create an artificial difference between living and dying? Dr. Thomas believed they were made natural creatures not continuing for ever if they never sinned, but would need a change to incorruptible nature at some time or other if they were to live for ever. You may not agree with him on this point but you cannot fault him.

And another doubtful argument - we know from 1 Timothy 2:14 that Eve was deceived and Adam was not, but you say "his taking of the fruit was a completely conscious and calculated act of disobedience and defiance." This man whom God made "very good" you have made into a calculating, defiant person in order he should disobey God. It is clear you have not considered Adam's circumstances in a sympathetic light. No one but God knows what Adam's reasoning was of course, but I believe it was more a matter of love and concern for Eve which made him partake of the fruit. If I may be allowed to suggest an alternative view I feel it may have been more like this - Eve had taken and eaten some of the forbidden fruit and then gone to Adam with some for him to eat. Adam knew the consequences of Eve's action and realized she was now about to lose her life that very day. Eve was the only person with whom he shared his life. I believe he had company of angels from time to time but Eve was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh and there was no other. He had been alone before Eve was brought to him and the prospect of being alone again in the world was too much to bear. He wanted to be with his wife, his bride, even if it was only to be for a short time and what was to befall her he wanted the same to befall him. However unreasonable this may have been it was a matter of what to do on the spur of the moment which swayed his judgment.

There is another reason for thinking along these lines and that is the relationship of Jesus Christ to His bride. By contrast we see Jesus Christ who died in place of His Bride so that He could be with her for ever. Adam was in the similar situation, whether he realized it or not we do not know, but we see that he chose the direct opposite. The contrast is typical. Adam wanted to be with his bride in the short term. Jesus Christ wanted to be with His bride for ever. Your harsh view and judgment reminds us of the words of Jesus Christ when questioned about divorce and He replied, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." There was a loving bond and harmony between the first pair and a longing to stay together. They were the ideal couple.

Now contradictory statements -

- a) "Anything less than Jesus' complete identification with the problems experienced by the rest of mankind would make His work a masquerade or a sham."
- b) "there is in every individual a predisposition towards sin. This predisposition is so strong, that every child born of two human parents sins."

You can't have it both ways. Either Jesus Christ had "complete identification" with His brethren born of two human parents or He had not. Upon your reasoning "complete identification" would have meant that

“predisposition is so strong” as to make Jesus Christ certain to sin. We believe that His complete identification with us shows that we too can overcome all temptation as He did.

It is unusual to see a Christadelphian put “sin’s flesh” first with “sinful” in brackets. You know that “sinful flesh” is not what Paul wrote and “sin’s flesh” is flesh belonging to sin as a Master. But you seem very reluctant to admit openly that this is Paul’s meaning, so next you talk of “flesh of sin” in order to cover up what you know to be true. “Flesh of sin” is an ambiguous term and could mean either “flesh belonging to sin” or “flesh full of sin.” After acknowledging that flesh belongs to sin and knowing full well where that leads, you now do a U-turn back to sinful flesh saying that “flesh of sin” explains our “predisposition towards sin.” Paul’s argument does not allow for this. Your quoting “We have the sentence of death in ourselves” does nothing to help your case. 2 Corinthians 1:9. The context in which Paul used that expression shows he was in danger of losing his life to violent men and trusted in God whatever the outcome.

The truth is that the B.A.S.F. does not allow for the teaching of Paul in Romans that Adam sold himself to Sin as a Master so we find ourselves on learning the truth, that we have been sold under Sin, that we are alienated from God and need reconciliation. This is the meaning of the word “Religion” - to bind back that which was broken. Christadelphians have been inhibited for so many years not to speak of any doctrine not covered in the B.A.S.F. that today they know and understand so little of the true meaning of Sacrifice, Redemption and Ransom, Alienation and Reconciliation.

Having been sold to Sin it was necessary to be bought back again. This Jesus Christ did by paying the Ransom price. We have been purchased with the life blood of Christ. His Sacrifice typified by the sacrifices for sin required in the Old Testament. It is utterly ridiculous to say these sacrifices were not substitutional. They were essentially substitutional. The sin-offering died in the place of the sinner. Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins, therefore there can be no saving from death, for death is the wages of sin. Jesus Christ said that He gave His life a ransom for (anti = in the place of) many. This is not a deep subject but Christadelphians have made their erroneous views so complex with all the deviations and contradictions inherited by tradition that there can be no proper understanding of Redemption until one approaches Scripture with a clean slate.

The idea that Adam and Eve were of some different nature unknown after the fall is an assumption which is neither necessary nor indicated anywhere in Scripture. Only two natures are revealed to us - natural and spiritual. The natural first then the spiritual. Jesus Christ was changed from a natural body to a spiritual body at His resurrection. The faithful will be changed from a natural body to a spiritual body at the return of Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve needed no change at the fall. There’s was already a natural body and would have needed a change to a spiritual body if it was to continue for ever. There is nothing to be gained by adding to Scripture, but this is what Christadelphians have done in following the Apostate Church. The 9th of the Church of England’s Thirty-nine Articles, contains these words :-

“Original Sin... is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man... whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into the world it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation, and this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh is not subject to the Law of God... etc.”

The comparison with Clause V is remarkable and it is evident that Robert Roberts rewrote this 9th Article in his own words for his own purpose.

I will conclude with part of a letter which Sister Helen Brady wrote recently in reply to a query regarding the declaration we print on the back cover of all our booklets, which declaration is in fact the first paragraph in our Booklet “The Gospel As We Understand It” by Ernest Brady. Helen wrote:-

“So I think it is clear that my father was at great pains to be sure that the views he was setting forth were not to be regarded as a statement of Faith or a creed.

As he writes later in the paragraph, “If or when anyone feels that he can show that any point is in conflict with reason or revelation we are glad to discuss it, for if we are wrong our chief concern is to get it right, but we do not attach much value to tradition.”

The views in the booklet are the conclusions we have reached up to the present time. But someone may yet show us a better way. I must say I doubt this, but as you will agree we must at all times be ready to learn and change and move on. The sort of rigidity of mind that inevitably goes with a man made statement of faith or creed has been the downfall of Christadelphians. They are tied to something outside the pages of Scripture, which unfortunately they have come to prefer to the Word of God, to their great detriment. They cannot bring themselves to examine their written creed impartially and so cannot or will not deviate from it whatever the cost. We do not want to fall into this trap as so many have before us.”

Dear Brother Ashton, there is much of value in what Sister Helen Brady has written and you know there are many who would ask you to learn and change and move on.

You may not wish to receive advice from such as me so please be guided by your own counsel and avoid the approach to Scripture which is so fraught with difficulties as to have potentially calamitous consequences for you and the Christadelphian community.

My Kind Regards to you, I wish we could agree in the service of Jesus Christ,

Russell Gregory.

Translation and Context

Comparing Scripture with Scripture

Context and translation, that is, corrected translation, help us to appreciate the Scriptures. Any correction should be to our advantage in understanding the word which has been left for us. There are many examples of corrected translation that have been put before us in the Revised Version. Some are familiar, others perhaps not. There are several translations that are evident, straight-forward and obvious but where we haven't necessarily taken in the meaning of the difference between the uncorrected and the corrected.

In Genesis chapter 4 we have the account of Cain and Abel and in verse 3, we read “In the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”

The word translated “sin” in the Hebrew is “*chattath*” which also means “sin-offering” as we see by reference to Young’s Concordance. If we now read “a sin offering lieth at the door,” that is to say that a sin offering is near by, we see that Cain is being given the opportunity of making his peace with God.

Next, if we note the margin reference which puts “subject unto thee” in place of “unto thee shall be his desire,” we may understand this to mean that as first-born he had a privilege over his younger brother, we see the mercy of the Lord God held out to Cain. This loss of privilege is later acknowledged by him when, after murdering Abel, (in verse 13), he confesses, “My punishment is greater than I can bear” or better rendered in the marginal reference as, “mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven.” Here he recognizes that his behaviour and his crime were unforgivable, and perhaps he realizes, too, the extent of the mercy the Lord had offered him and which he had rejected.

By looking at the details of this translation we see a most rewarding lesson, that this is a God which delighteth in mercy, though it is sometimes rejected by man.

There is much to be gained by looking at the matter of the translation of the Hebrew wording spoken by the Lord God to Adam in the Garden of Eden. These are the words but what we make of them may be a personal matter. “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Grammatically these words are recognized as being correct. Dr. Thomas, in a footnote in “EIpis Israel”, page 69, wrote, “The Hebrew idiom is correctly represented by the text of the Authorized Version. Compare verse 16, Eating, thou shalt eat, and Deuteronomy 13:15, literally, smiting thou shalt smite. The Hebrew idiom is used to emphasize the matter. The text and the margin reference being in agreement and meaning ‘certainly smite,’ and ‘certainly die.’ ”

While no one has a mandate to tell us what we ought to believe, no one has the right to pick and choose what he will accept from the Scriptures, but we do have the right and the duty to search the Scriptures and seek diligently until we have as full a knowledge and understanding of them as possible, and Jesus Christ promised “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

It is in the Garden of Eden that we first learn the story of man’s redemption and we must therefore have a good knowledge and understanding of the events which took place in Eden in order to see the path that leads to our salvation.

The Bible does not teach that Adam and Eve became corruptible because of their sin; they were, in fact, created corruptible, as were all other creatures which God made “very good.” The natural death which eventually came upon Adam was not the death he incurred by his transgression in the Garden of Eden, for the death due to him was a premature cutting off of his life in the very day he transgressed. This was suffered in type by the animal slain to provide a covering for his sin.

Let us proceed in the time honoured way by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Genesis 2:17 - “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The Hebrew “*Muth temuth*,” translated “thou shalt surely die,” was the warning given to Adam should he transgress God’s law and the phrase is used in the following instances.

Genesis 20:3 to 7 - “God came to Abimelech... and said...Behold thou art but a dead man... Abimelech... said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? ...Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.”

Genesis 26:11 - “And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that touchest this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

Leviticus 27:29 - “None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed: but shall surely be put to death.”

1 Kings 2:36-46 - “Build thee an house in Jerusalem... for ...on the day that thou goest out... thou shalt surely die... And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and come again, and the king sent for and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the Lord, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certainty, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die?... So the King commanded Benaiah... which went out and fell upon him that he died.”

2 Kings 1:16,17 - “For as much as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub... therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. So he died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken.”

Jeremiah 26:8-19 - "...the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die... Then spake the priests... This man is worthy to die... Then spake Jeremiah... if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves..."

The context of each passage shows that "*muth temuth*" was the threat of a judicially inflicted death, and never means the gradual ageing process such as Adam actually experienced.

From the above then, it is evident that ordinary Biblical usage of the phrase "*muth temuth*" means putting to a judicial, premature death, usually in a violent manner, and not a dying of a natural death. So Genesis 2:17 should be understood in the same manner.

The above then, proves beyond question that Adam, in strict justice, should have been put to death for his sin and in strict justice should have been put to death in the very day he sinned.

Next let us consider the Hebrew phrase "*B'Yom*"

Genesis 2:17 - "Thou shall not eat of it: for in the day (*B'yon*) that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

In the first three chapters of Genesis the word day is used to denote a day of:-

(1) 12 hours, as in Genesis 1:16, "the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night;

(2) perhaps 24 hours, as in Genesis 3:5 and 8, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes will be opened," and "in the cool of the day."

(3) an extended period, as in Genesis 2:4 where it refers to the six "days" of creation, as "in the day that the Lord God made the heavens and the earth."

None of the Genesis references necessarily cover a period of a thousand years, and there is no reason for us to suppose Adam was meant to understand that when God said to him "in the day thou eatest thereof" that He meant a period of a thousand years.

"In the day" is for instance -

Genesis 3:5 – "In the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened." How long? immediately!

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." - while still in the garden of Eden. It is also quite evident that the serpent understood they were talking about the same "day" when he said to Eve, "for God knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes will be opened." Their eyes were opened straight away and they knew they were naked; It didn't take them a thousand years to find out!

Again, in **Genesis 5:8**, "In the cool of the day," and again, **1 Kings 2:36,37** - "Build thee an house in Jerusalem... for on the day (*B'Yom*) thou goest out.--thou shalt surely die."

A more exact parallel could not be desired. It is evident that Solomon and Shemei understood "*Muth temuth*" to mean inflicted death, and "*B'yon*" to refer to a literal day. This is comparing Scripture with Scripture - the simplest and most trustworthy method.

The following extract from The Companion Bible also shows the warning to Adam and Eve could not have referred to a "day of a thousand years" for we read:-

"The Hebrew term '*Beyom*' means literally "in the day" and in most occurrences the primary sense gives an excellent rendering, such as is lost, or at least weakened, by the adoption of any secondary meaning. Reference to the occurrences will satisfy in this respect bearing in mind the

call for adherence to the primary sense of the words wherever that sense will harmonize with the context.

With the Lord God, promise or threatening is fulfilled to the letter. That Adam did not die “in the day” was due to the riches of the Divine grace which, in view of Calvary, respite him, till shut out from the tree of life, he died a “natural death.” For the penalty was a judicial death “in the day” that he disobeyed.

Thus the Lord is “the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Timothy 4:10), for the entire race being “in Adam” owes this present life to the great reconciliation of Calvary so that each one is responsible to that gift. Eternal life is for believers alone, those “in Christ;” for rejecters there remains but “the second death,” the lake of fire.

The emphatic testimony of Scripture is that:-

- (1) without shedding of blood there is no remission,
- (2) reconciliation has been effected on the Cross, and
- (3) eternal salvation is something beyond reconciliation, although founded on the same rock. See Romans 5 etc.”

“The Companion Bible - Appendix 18.

* * *

A view which has been expressed by some is that God would not say one thing and then do another; He would not change His mind but is ever true to His word and means what He says. But this argument begs the question, Do we know the mind of God? So we ask, is the view valid? Is it supported by Scripture?

In Isaiah 38:1 we read, “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him. Thus saith the Lord, Put thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.” Hezekiah prays earnestly for his life and was granted another fifteen years, so what God said would happen, did not. Because God had compassion on king Hezekiah and showed him mercy.

Again, consider Jonah 3:2 to 5, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of thee days journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s Journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them.” – the prophet was told to go and tell the people of Nineveh that their city will be destroyed in forty days, and when the 40 days were up what happened? Did God keep to His word and destroy the city. No, He did not, because they repented and changed their ways. And God had compassion on the people of Nineveh and showed them mercy.

Genesis 22:2 God told Abraham to “Take now thy son... whom thou lovest... and offer him there for a burnt offering,” and then in verse 12, God said, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad...” Did God change His mind? No, this was a test of Abraham’s faith and God had compassion and showed mercy on both Abraham and Isaac.

Even so in the Garden of Eden, God tested the faith of Adam and Eve, but when they failed in their obedience to the law, God had mercy on them and did not carry out the cutting off of their lives; but there was a death that day when God slew the animal to provide covering for Adam and Eve, and this sacrifice was typical of what was to follow, as were the sacrifices under the law of Moses, those animals were put to death in the place of the sinner, and Jesus Christ was the great Anti-type.

Both the law of Eden and the law of Moses required the death of the sinner, but this death, due to man, was voluntarily borne by Jesus Christ, and because God has compassion on us, in His great mercy He asks that we show our faith by going through that death in symbol only - in baptism into Jesus Christ, His Son.

Romans 6:3 - "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

We must accept that Adam and Eve understood the events and circumstances at the time. Firstly that their Creator was good to them when He talked with them in the Garden, and we must agree that they understood Him and that the law, the only law He placed them under, "Thou shalt not..." was for their good, and to disobey would bring the dire consequence of death.

When they had transgressed that law they were smitten with guilt and were afraid and hid themselves. Their first reaction was fear, unknown to them before, when in company with the Elohim, but now there was fear of the consequences of the law they had broken, fear of death.

After they were discovered and accused they both made excuses, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Their relief and joy at not being put to death was tempered by the shock of witnessing the slaying of the animals when God provided skins for their clothing after He had rejected their attempts to cover themselves with garments of leaves. This slaying of the animals was to provide their covering for sin and allowed them to stand before God and receive promises of further action by the Lord God to remove the sin altogether, prophecies and blessings that in due time the tempter would be destroyed and the power of sin would be defeated by one of Eve's offspring.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15.

He also gave them to understand that their circumstances were now to be changed, they were to be removed from the Garden - a place specially provided and planted by God for their home and for their food, a benign environment now to be abandoned. They were to live in the outside world where there would be a natural but more difficult existence, having to support themselves for food and raiment and shelter. They would live under new circumstances, a new set of rules, which contained promises of blessings as well as curses.

The events at this time and the words which were spoken to Adam and Eve, the responses they made such as; "Adam called his wife's name Eve for she was (to be) the mother of all living;" Eve's statement "I have gotten a man from the Lord" and also when she said "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel" show their understanding and hope.

Here we see a degree of reconciliation - life and hope -

We see Adam and Eve saved in some measure from sin, blessed with children and long life, who could surely live and die in hope. The hope we all have, to see the end of sin and death promised through the love and mercy of God and brought about by the One "full of grace and truth" who for the joy set before him endured the Cross and despised the shame.

So in the garden of Eden God tested the faith of Adam and Eve, but when they failed He still had compassion on them and did not cut off their lives but had mercy on them and provided a covering for their sin.

This was the death that day which they had not been told about. A covering which protected them from the consequences of their disobedience, this life given for the remission of sin was typical of the other sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses and fulfilled or completed, i.e. perfected by our Redeemer In due time.

1 Timothy 2:5,6:- "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

These sacrifices were put to death in the place of the sinner; a principle demonstrated on the day of the first Passover. Had the proof of the death of the Passover Lamb not been shown on the posts and lintels the life of the first-born would have been lost, but the angel of death saw the blood and was satisfied. Now all sacrifices incur a putting to death, a violent, untimely death, for it was the wages of sin, natural death is inherent in all flesh and blood creation. Paul wrote, first the natural and then the spiritual. Our Lord Jesus was the first natural man to attain to spiritual life as a consequence of pleasing His Father, and it is our hope that we too, by virtue of His sacrifice and His acceptance of us, and in His mercy be granted a place in His Kingdom with the blessed gift of immortal life.

Correspondence between Dr. Thomas and Lancelot Burrus - 1855

There are approximately twelve doctrines in Christendom which Dr. Thomas researched, and this letter contains the last of them, so completing his life work for the examination of apostate doctrines, but like all human effort, it can be seen to be sometimes contradictory, but always progressive, towards a complete review of apostate doctrines revealing the truth in the end.

The error Dr. Thomas perceived here had its roots in the mistranslation repeated in all translations of the Bible I have seen and upheld to be true by the whole of apostate Christendom, even though recognized to be a mistranslation by all language scholars, i.e. Romans 8:3. The word translated “sinful” should read “sin’s” - it is not an adjective but a possessive pronoun indicating one under the dominion of sin (food for thought!), where we were once, but Jesus Christ never was.

From “The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come” for July 1855 - the first letter is dated May 6, 1855:-

“Doctor John Thomas:- Dear Sir, - I am pleased with your writings, and believe them scriptural. I can say, Sir, you certainly have the law and the testimony on your side.

My friend, Mr. A. Anderson, was kind enough to send me Elpis Israel, which I think is a book of books. You have therein displayed more close study and research than any commentator I have read, either ancient or modern. You have certainly, Sir, brought forth the light out of darkness, though you will not understand me to say that I sanction or agree to every part...

My notion is that all creation became corrupt at the fall... I think you leave your readers rather in the dark as regards the creation of systems of worlds...

I am not in the habit of scribbling my notions, and you will find they are not made quite so plain as might be to suit many; but, Sir, I know a hint to you is enough to understand what I mean, or the idea intended to be conveyed...

You will accept assurances of regard from,

Lancelot Burrus. Orange Co. Virginia.

Dr. Thomas replied as follows:-

Our Terrestrial System Before The Fall. Our friend says, that his notion is that all creation became corrupt at the fall, even to the elements. This is the general idea. Moses tells us very plainly, that when the terrestrial system was completed on the Sixth Day, that God reviewed all that He had made, and pronounced it “very good.” But, in what sense was it very good? In an animal and physical sense; for it was a natural and animal system, not a spiritual one. Such a system is essentially one of waste and reproduction; and was organized with reference to what God knew would come to pass. This is implied in the placing of the earth in such a position with respect to the sun, moon, and stars, that there should be a diversity of seasons, etc. Thus, fall and winter, seasons of decay and death, were institutions existing before the Fall; and presented to Adam and Eve phenomena illustrative of the existence in the physical

system of a principle of corruption, the extent of which, however, they might not have been fully apprized of.

Death and corruption then, with reproduction, the characteristic of spring and summer, is the fundamental law of the physical system of the Six Days. Adam and Eve, and all the other animals born of the earth with themselves, would have died and gone to corruption, if there had been no transgression, provided that there had been no further interference with the physical system than Moses records in his history of the Six Days... the death principle was an essential property of their nature. - But, the inquirer means, "If they would have died anyhow under the proviso, how can death be said to be the consequence of sin?" Death is not the consequence of sin... all that would be necessary would be to let things take their natural course...

But, the inquirer wants to know, Suppose they had lived in the obedience of faith all the time that might have been appointed for their probation in Paradise, would they not have died? Certainly they would, if there had been no arrangement divinely interposed to prevent death. This arrangement existed in connection with the Tree of Lives. We learn from the Mosaic account that the eating of that tree would impart immortality or deathlessness; for we are told that they were expelled from Paradise that they might not eat of that tree and live for ever. It is certain, therefore, that the animal nature they possessed was essentially a mortal nature, and required to be physically operated upon by the power transmissible through contact with the Tree of Lives to change it into a nature constitutionally capable of enduring forever; which the animal nature is not.

We have an illustration of what would have happened to Adam and Eve if they had continued in the obedience of faith, in what we are taught is to occur in the case of the obedient believers belonging to the generation contemporary with the appearing of the Lord Jesus in power and great glory. These, designated by Paul as "we who are alive and remain," he declares "shall not sleep, but shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." This was not revealed till he communicated it; for he styles it "a mystery," or secret, which, says he, "Behold, I show you." Here then, are persons found living in the obedience of faith at the Lord's appearing. Everyone admits that they are constitutionally animal and mortal, though, it is revealed, that they should not die, if they be of the living remnant contemporary with His appearing. Their not dying is conditional, as in the case of Adam and Eve - if they be found in the obedience of faith, and if contemporaries of the advent; otherwise not. But in not dying into death, as with Enoch and Elijah, the dying process which commences with birth must be interrupted and terminated by the interposition of divine power; even by that power that rebuilds the bodies of the dead upon new physical principles; in other words, by the Spirit of God that would have changed the eaters of the Tree of Lives in Eden; that raised up the mortal body of Jesus; and that will raise up and change the saints by Jesus, when in their case "mortality shall be swallowed up of life"...

That is to say, there was no new physical principle infused into their nature that was not there before they transgressed... From these premises it will be seen, that we dissent from our correspondent's notion that all creation became corrupt (by which we understand him to mean, constitutionally impregnated with corruptibility) at the Fall. We believe that the change consequent upon that calamity was moral, not physical. The natural system was the same the day before the Fall as the day after... Adam and Eve were innocent and undefiled but without character...

If men honestly desire salvation, let them seek these with their whole heart... Let us be contented with "the simplicity of Christ"

Dr. Thomas.

* * *

The last chapter of Job reveals the fact that three of his friends, Eliphaz, the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, were rejected by God and in chapter 42, verses 7 to 9 we read,

"And it was so that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: The Lord accepted Job."

In this instance it appears that Job acted as their priest in offering up offerings for their error, or their sin, and as it was contrary to the truth as regards God Himself, could be called blasphemy. But they were offered forgiveness via repentance and a sin offering. God was merciful- They had maligned Him.

There are many examples recorded of what they said about the Lord God. They are very revealing, but one that is quite innocuous is the statement that Eliphaz made, "Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight." (Job 15:15).

These three friends of Job had spoken lies about the Lord God, and He had responded by offering them a way to find forgiveness with Him, and in this instance it appears they responded with good grace and offered the required offering through the services and prayer of God's servant Job.

What were the lies they had spoken about God? There are several instances. Job 4:18 to 21, we read, "Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and the angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They were destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die even without wisdom."

Does not Job mock them in chapter 12 verse 2? - "No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you." He knew better.

Again, in Job 15, 14 & 15. "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight." But in the day of creation "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." (Genesis 3:31).

And again, in Job 22:3, "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

And in Job 25:4-6, where we read "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm." Again we say everything that God had made was very good.

The Lord God created the heavens and we read in Genesis 1:31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." Good in respect for the purpose for which it was made. Not morally good, the physical world that He had made had no moral issue - no moral context.

The only moral context revealed in the early chapters of Scripture is man's moral attitude which is dependent entirely on his choice. None of the physical things which God had made in the creative years had a choice, but man had a choice. He was made good for the purpose for which he was made, but morality didn't come into the equation at all. Morality arose only when he was given a law and being able to keep or break that law through free will. So morality became an issue as the consequence of law.

We are not told why they were so foolish and perhaps it was seen as foolishness and not blasphemy, for the Lord God told Eliphaz what he must do to atone for their mistake.

In Job 42:8 we read, "Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I

accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them."

Having misjudged in so many ways the character, the mercy and indeed the love of the Lord God, they now learned from this experience that their concept of the Lord God was in error.

Turning now to the New Testament we see another example of poor translation in Paul's letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, verse 14; "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

The word "even" is an interpolation by the translators. It is not in the original. It should read "In whom we have redemption through his blood. The forgiveness of sins." Clearly two separate things. By using the word 'even' it gives a comparative similarity. But here are two different things, that are not similar. We are helped to understand this better in one of Paul's other writings - Ephesians 1:7, The same introduction,

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace."

Redemption is a covenant. It is a legal term. Forgiveness is the outcome of mercy, according to the riches of His grace, or favour. Next verse -

"Wherein he hath abounded toward us (his favour) in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

Redemption, being a matter of covenant shows us where we stand in relation to the Lord God. Jesus redeemed us with His blood. He bought us; He took us out of Adam unto Himself, so that He could present us to God and now standing before God as His children in Christ, we have access unto the Father for the forgiveness of sins. Redemption is passed. It happened two thousand years ago when the Lord gave His life. We accepted it during the course of our lifetime when we were baptized into Him. Subsequent to that we have forgiveness of sins, because we have access to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator at God's right hand.

Another quotation that can be looked at for a second time because of the mistake made by the translators, a mistake that is well known to all translators of the Greek, and that is in Romans 8:3,

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

The adjective here 'sinful' is not in the original, it is not an adjective describing flesh. It is a possessive pronoun. In the original it reads "Flesh of sin." Paul said, "I am sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). We were in sin's possession, before we were baptized we belonged to sin, when we were baptized we belonged to Christ Jesus, it says here came in the likeness of flesh and blood like our own which belonged to sin; we know He didn't belong to sin but His flesh and blood was like the flesh and blood of those who did belong to sin. It was through His work of redemption that we need not remain under sin but in Him, under righteousness and the mercy of God.

This is a simple grammatical mistake that has tainted or affected our understanding of what flesh is.

In the earlier chapters of Romans, chapters 4,5,6 & 7, flesh is mentioned many times and not necessarily as flesh and blood but as a circumstance under which we were before we were redeemed. Paul could go on to say we are no longer in the flesh. He was not speaking of flesh and blood, he was talking about a relationship to Adam. We were the children of Adam.

Let us turn to Romans 7, verse 5,

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" but Paul wrote later, in chapter 8 verse 8,

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."

Romans 8:8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," has to be understood metaphorically. We are not referring to physical flesh and blood, the natural man, we are talking about flesh as relating to what Paul describes a fleshly covenant which is circumcision and the will of the flesh which is unrestrained evil. Flesh as in Adam, not physically but under Adamic condemnation. That all is concluded under sin - Adam's sin, so that we may all be concluded under the righteousness of Christ. Dr. Thomas explains this as being under a federal, or collective headship, as a citizen of a nation of a given country, such as French or English or German, and by baptism we come out from under the domain of sin, and by adoption, into the domain of the Lord God through the redemptive covenant brought about by the giving of the life of the Lord.

At this point we will consider the word 'body' in relation to two of Paul's statements in Romans, we read, "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin." This body of sin is not our body of flesh and blood but is the organization, the regime of sin which we put off, or put behind us. It is nothing to do with our physical nature of flesh and blood. And if we turn to Colossians 2:11, we read,

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

Putting off the body. It is not our body of flesh and blood, it is putting off or putting away, or putting behind us that body regime, or system which was not of the spirit, but of the flesh when we were in the flesh. On these two occasions Paul uses the word body metaphorically in the same way as "in the flesh" is metaphorical, referring to the age of unregenerate man.

Romans 8:10: "and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

In the previous verse we read, "but ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." But we are in the flesh physically, but metaphorically we have put off the works of the flesh, that is, the tie, when we were subject to the will of the flesh only and had not the Spirit of Christ. Now that we have the Spirit of Christ we read, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," - it is behind us, "but the spirit, present tense, "is life because of righteousness," not our own but Christ's, who has brought us through from the life in the flesh to the life in the spirit through the waters of baptism. The new man is born. Verses 11 to 14, "But if the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies (give our present mortal bodies life; quicken - to give life), by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live- For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

1 Corinthians 6:15: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ," and verse 19, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which ye have of God and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's."

In his letter to the Philippians chapter 1, verse 20, Paul refers to his body,

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed but that with all boldness as always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death."

His body was now a servant of righteousness. But later, chapter 3 verse 21, he writes,

"Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Earlier he speaks of his body as a servant of righteousness, and now as a vile body. Look up the word "vile" in the concordance and we find that the word "vile" is a translation which should read, "common" "ordinary," or part of humanity, meaning this mortal body in which we live and move and have our being, created by God and is common to all men, which will be changed to a spiritual body at the resurrection at the coming of Christ.

The importance of the Atonement cannot be overestimated; it was the subject of conversation when Jesus, Moses and Elias were on the Mount of Transfiguration; and much was said by Jesus on the same subject to the two disciples whom He joined on the road to Emmaus, causing their hearts to "burn within" them. On these two occasions Christ's thoughts centred around the Atonement knowing that He was the "Holy Thing" born of His mother, Mary - the Lamb which God Himself provided - "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and the "Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

The work of God in Christ was designed to bring about a relationship between God and His creation in which mankind would render to Him the honour and the glory due to His Great and Holy Name, for He had declared that His purpose is to fill the whole earth with His glory, and this can only be done by populating it with those who voluntarily reflect the Glory of God as it was revealed in the person and character of Jesus Christ.

If we begin with God's creation of man upon earth we learn at the outset of man's rebellion against God, and how that, through disobedience of His command, man became the servant of Sin and wandered from the way of life, and by transgression, merited the sentence of death.

In the mercy of God, "for God delighteth in mercy," He provided a way of redeeming man from the dominion of sin under which transgression had brought him. Instead of Adam perishing and God's plan to fill the earth with His Glory being frustrated, Adam was provisionally redeemed with the blood of an animal, the ultimate redemptive price was to be the natural life of Jesus, and by this means we can see how "God is the Saviour of all men..." and how Jesus was "a Ransom for all." This redemption from destruction in Adam, unto natural life which we all possess was in order to give us opportunity to serve God.

Because of the possibility of Adam and his descendants choosing to live unto sin rather than serve God, it was needful to bar the way to the Tree of Life. In the wisdom of God the privilege of eating of the Tree of Life was withdrawn, and having been created from the beginning a natural creature of the dust of the ground, ageing and decay were inevitable and that which befalleth the beasts befalleth man also, "for they have all one breath."

From the time of Adam's expulsion from the garden, he had to live by faith, in the hope that some day "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Faith in "the Seed" was required by God. Where this was present man was put back on probation to develop character, as Enoch, Noah, and others who hoped in the promised Grace of God.

Abraham, by faith, saw God as the Redeemer and Christ as God's Lamb whom He offered; for God did as Abraham said He would when he spoke to his son, Isaac, saying, "God Himself will provide a Lamb." Abraham saw the Day of Christ and rejoiced; he saw the Seed of the woman, the Lamb of God's providing which God Himself offered; a Lamb who voluntarily took upon Himself the heavy load of our iniquities; a spotless Lamb in every sense, for this Lamb was none other than the "Messiah, the Prince, cut off, but not for himself," who laid down His life even as those who would dare to die for a good man and in the fullest sense, man for man - as indeed the text referred to makes clear, for "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," and when the Lord Jesus told His disciples about His coming death He was very precise in the words He chose; the Greek word "anti" meaning "instead of" or "in place of," as in the paying of a ransom to free a slave.

Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give his life a ransom for many.”

How could one die for a good man if he did not take his place? The answer to this makes it plain what is meant by Christ dying for us. When Christ died for us it was “the Just for the unjust.” This loving act of His for us resulted in us having only to die symbolically in the waters of baptism, for we are buried with Christ in baptism. The literal death due to sinful man Christ suffered for us, for, “He hath once suffered for sins,” “the Just for the unjust” knowing that by so doing God would anoint Him with “the oil of gladness above His fellows.” Psalm 45:7

By His dying unto “Sin” once He has made us “free from the law of sin and death,” for “now are we the sons of God” upon whom “there is therefore now no condemnation (i.e. judgment), for we have passed from death unto life.” Christ may be long in coming and we may fall asleep, but this is not the execution of the sentence but the natural outcome of being made of the dust of the ground.

Leaving the type we now come to the anti-type, Jesus Christ, begotten of God, born of a virgin. By being born of a virgin Jesus was unmistakably begotten of God. It was also necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin to fulfil the prophecy relating to Him being Immanuel - “God with us,” which the prophet Isaiah said was to be a sign given by God. The logical conclusion is that to be begotten, He must have derived His life from God and not from man. The natural life which Jesus possessed was derived from His Father. Therefore, a life not from Adam, for Christ, not being “in Adam” had a life none could lawfully take from Him for He said He had “life in Himself.” John 5:26, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the son to have life in himself.”

He knew that the “corn of wheat” of which He spoke was Himself and that if He did not offer His life as a Ransom He would “abide alone,” but out of love for His fellow man, being bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, “He gave His life a ransom for all.” Paul wrote, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes, He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich.”

Adam, through transgression, brought himself and his posterity under the dominion of sin; their right to life was lost. They indeed had now become poor, but Christ was never in their position for He was rich, having life and the right to hold it. At no time did His life belong to Sin, and for this reason His life was very precious - “the precious blood of Christ” - no other life “could redeem his brother.” Peter wrote, “We are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ” - bought from the dominion of Sin. The price of our release was paid with the blood of “the Lamb of God,” and so the “sin of the world” was taken away by an act of God’s love and the loving co-operation of His Son who gave His life for the life of the world. No other life could have bought it and for this simple reason it was necessary for Christ to be in possession of a life which did not already belong to Sin. In this is seen the reason Christ derived His life directly from God.

The word “life” is translated from two Greek words - “*psuche*” meaning natural flesh and blood life and “*zoe*” meaning eternal life, life of promise, life which begins at baptism, the new life or newness of life.

Jesus said, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” It was His natural life which Jesus laid down - and took not again, no, not even for an hour, for “He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.” He was sown a natural body, He was raised a spiritual body- Jesus had what none other had, for He had right to His natural life (*psuche*) which God gave Him, and right to God’s promise of eternal life (*zoe*). The former was in His power to lay down, none having power to take it from Him; and the latter He had merited by His perfect obedience and was His for the asking. (Psalm 21:4, “He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.”). The former was the *psuche* life He laid down and took not again, for it was the offering for sin. “My (*psuche*) life I give for the sheep.” The laying down of His *psuche* life meant “He suffered death for all men.” “Christ hath once suffered for sins...” Adam and all mankind in him had sinned and the law of sin and death demanded the *psuche* life of sinners to be taken, or its corresponding price paid, as is implied by “ransom” - i.e. “*antilutron*” in Greek, means “corresponding price.” God, in His mercy, provided the corresponding price - a life which was not “Sin’s” for the release of Adam and all his posterity in him, for their lives belonged to Sin; not so Christ’s.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read that “God hath made Jesus to be sin for us.” Now all Scripture points to the fact that Christ was a “Sin Offering.” The only sense in which Christ could be “made sin for us” was by the transfer of our sins to Himself, as shown by the law of Moses; sinners placed their hands upon the head of the animal to be offered, confessing their sins, so symbolically transferring their sins to the innocent victim which in no sense had any sins of its own.

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life (*zoe* life) and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (*zoe*)” (John 5:24), and in 1 John 3:34 we read, “We know that we have passed from death unto life (*zoe*), because we love the brethren.”

Why then do we die? We have been by Christ redeemed, in Christ restored, and “our sins have been forgiven for Christ’s sake.” Our natural death is therefore in no sense the sentence, for this fell on the innocent Victim, who was slain to provide a covering for sin. God did not contravene the law of sin and death when He kept alive Enoch and Elijah. Neither will He when those “which are alive and remain (at His Christ’s coming) shall be caught up...to meet the Lord...” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Paul said to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:10), Christ “hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” Obviously Jesus has abolished death’s sentence which fell upon Adam and all in him; the result being they are allowed to live out their natural lives. It was God’s purpose to save in this sense, and it was an act of grace, for it is written (1 Timothy 4:10), “God, who is the Saviour of all men,” but those who are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit, come under those referred to in the latter part of that passage, “...specially of those that believe;” they are now said to have “passed from death unto (*zoe*) life.” (1 John 3:14).

When did the Lamb of God take away the sin of the world? It was when He said, “It is finished.” Now we can see that “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death,” If we are found among those that are in Christ Jesus, through baptism into His death, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, then for those “there is now no condemnation.” But those who have spurned God’s grace are amenable to condemnation because they obey not the Gospel. The Good News.

We read, “If the spirit of Christ be in us we are His” and Christ has asked of us perfection, and God has asked of us holiness, and let it be remembered, all His laws we can keep if we will. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” The way is straight and the path is narrow and those who wander out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead, but “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” (John 17:3).

It is not too much to say that knowledge brings responsibility. Our knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ is essential to our obtaining life eternal. Ignorance alienates, but if we have heard Christ and been taught by Him, “as the truth is in Jesus,” we shall be in that happy position of knowing Him and to know Him is to know the Father. To know God necessitates walking with God, so shall we know His character as “the Lord gracious and merciful.” To know Him necessarily includes knowing His plan of Redemption and the reason for it, and to see in it His love, wisdom, justice and mercy, all of which are revealed in God’s work in Christ when He was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

It is well nigh impossible for us to entertain any hope of eternal life without an understanding and appreciation of the scriptural teaching of the Atonement. Of all the teaching contained in Scripture the understanding of this subject has more influence upon the character than any other.

The fear of the Lord may be the beginning of wisdom, but the love of God is wisdom herself and “happy is the man that retaineth her.” In God’s work in Christ we see how “God so loved the world” when “He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

May the love of Christ constrain us to honour the Son even as we honour the Father and worship them both in the beauty of holiness.

Ray Gregory.

On Resigning Membership from a Christadelphian Ecclesia

The above paper was given at a Bible Class on 3rd June 1998. Sometime later the writer was questioned with regard to beliefs expressed in the article.

The writer was then asked to meet with three of the Managing Brethren to discuss his understanding of some of the issues raised. This invitation to meet with three Managing Brethren was refused and scriptural support for the actions of the Managing Brethren was requested.

The scriptural support was given as Matthew 18 vv 15-18 which they considered was self-explanatory.

In response to this the writer said that he was

“grieved that the expression of my understanding of the nature of the sacrifice of Christ should be considered a trespass against any member of the ecclesia”

and that the

“injunction (Matthew 18:15-18) refers to the day to day congress of one member with another on matters of morality.”

He went on to explain that the practise of using Matthew 18:15-18 in this way was not in harmony with Christ’s teaching in that chapter and amounted to a misapplication of Scripture being used against

“one who has at heart nothing but the interests and spiritual well-being of each and every fellow-member.”

The writer stated that he knew of no scriptural procedure which could justify the practise of disfellowship.

In the writer’s view the meeting with more than one at a time for this purpose could lead to intimidation and confusion.

On three occasions the writer made known in writing to the Managing Brethren that he was willing to meet with any member of the Managing Brethren or of the Ecclesia for the purpose of discussing his views but would not allow himself to be outnumbered as this cannot be helpful to a proper understanding of the views of others.

This exchange of letters continued until the 27th December 1998 during which time the writer supplied three copies of his talk to the Managing Brethren who said they would “consider it line by line.”

Nothing more was heard from the Managing Brethren and on the 13th March 1999 Brother Ray and Sister Eileen Gregory wrote the following letter:-

“To the members of Orphanage Road Christadelphian Ecclesia. Since the publication of the editorial in “The Christadelphian” magazine for October 1998, we have been reminded that membership of Christadelphian Ecclesias is dependent upon acceptance of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith.

We are among many Christadelphians who have from time to time during the past 125 years made known our non-acceptance of parts of Clauses V, VIII and XII.

We therefore find it necessary that we resign our membership of the Erdington Ecclesia.

It is with the deepest regret that we do this.

We would like to thank all members of the Erdington Ecclesia for their love and fellowship over the last seventy years.”

Ray and Eileen Gregory

NOTE: At the time of printing this (March 26th) no further communication has been received from the Managing Brethren.

* * * *

“O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing, unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength: seek his face evermore.”

Psalm 105:1-4