

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 198

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Editorial

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends, Loving Greetings.

Levels of anxiety, both personal and public have reached new heights in recent days with all the talk about an imminent war. For those with faith in God and His vast eternal plan, the natural place to turn at such times for help is the Bible.

Jesus offers practical advice in the Sermon on the Mount, counsel which is reflected in the words of Thomas Carlyle who wisely said: "Our main business is not to see what dimly lies ahead, but what lies at hand." This would seem to be exactly what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." How easy it is to race ahead in our minds into an unseen and unknown future, and torture ourselves with apprehensive thoughts, "what if...?" "supposing...?" and "how shall I...? Such thoughts are particularly potent at 3 o'clock in the morning when sleep is difficult to come by. Like all the best advice it is simple. Live a day at a time.

The second element in the biblical prescription for anxiety comes from Jesus' lesson in faith illustrated in His instruction to the disciples, when He told them to "launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for the draught." They were professional fishermen who had already "toiled all night and taken nothing." So the advice must have seemed futile. But they had faith and they were obedient to Jesus and did what He suggested and made a great catch. We too must have faith and do as Jesus tells us.

A third element in this prescription for anxiety comes from Paul's attitude to adverse circumstances; "I have learned" he wrote, "in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." I read recently that this rendering from the Authorised Version seemed to suggest a sort of resigned acceptance and we really need more than that to cope with difficult times. A better version of Paul's response was said to be found in the New English Bible's translation, and I agree; Paul says: "I have learned to find resources in myself whatever my circumstances." Often our inner resources are more than we realise, as when we look back at particularly testing times in our lives and we see that we were stronger and more secure in our faith than we thought. Faith, that is at all times supported by God and His angels. "Acknowledge Him in all thy ways, and He will direct thy paths."

In the comforting words of farewell written by Jude: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding Joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen."

Love to all far and near. Helen Brady

Below we reproduce a reply to an enquirer which again has a bearing on the subject of God-manifestation which we were considering in the article by Dr. Thomas in our last Circular Letter.

Was Christ Human and Divine?

A reply to an enquirer who writes: -

“My difficulty is in reconciling His divinity with His humanity. Most of the New translations refer to His being of divine nature and emptying Himself so as to take on human nature. I refer mainly to Philippians 2:5 in Weymouth, Moffatt; and the New Bible says, “The divine nature was His from the first.” Now my problem is how could He have emptied Himself of the divine nature if He did not pre-exist to occupy it at first? Perhaps I have a wrong conception of human nature and divine nature.”

My dear X. Loving greetings in Jesus Name and thanks for your letter of the 26th. I am pleased to know you were interested in the Circular Letter and will be glad to answer your question to the best of my ability.

If you can accept it, the way out of your difficulty is perfectly easy - it is to realise that in His life in the flesh Jesus had no divinity in the sense generally believed, so that the problem of reconciling divine nature with human nature does not arise.

I know the passages of scripture which are relied upon by those - the great majority of Christians - who believe either in the pre-existence of Jesus or in His divinity or both, and although I cannot in all cases go back to the Greek or Hebrew and say exactly how they ought to be translated, I am quite satisfied from the simple factual evidence given us in our own tongue that no one is justified in believing that Jesus existed in any shape or form before He was born or that He had a nature which was a mixture of human and divine. The explanation of such passages is that He existed in the mind and purpose of God as a building may exist in the mind of an architect or in his drawing before it is commenced and that when He came He was in Himself and in His teaching a manifestation or revelation of God.

In my view this is not a difficult problem at all; it has been made difficult by those who mix up things that ought to be kept separate and confuse physical nature with inheritance and flesh with relationship.

All we need to do is keep in mind that Jesus was a man; and if a man then not a half-man half-God being. To me, the value of the Gospels is that the accounts of His birth, life and death prove this fact - as John says, The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth - and I am certain that the views held by modern Churchmen and by Christadelphians would have been denounced by the Apostles as heresy, because they knew that Jesus was a man, not a half god.

In the Epistle of John, chapter 4, verses 2 and 15, there is what I think is the basic confession of faith: “Hereby know ye the spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God,” and “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” To believe that Jesus was partly divine appears to me to constitute a denial that He came in the flesh, for we are flesh and we are not mixtures of human and divine nature, so how could Jesus have been that, seeing He was also a man of flesh like ourselves?

Do not misunderstand me; there is, of course, a vast difference between Jesus and other men and this is the counterpart of the true confession just mentioned - that He is the Son of God. What we have to understand is the true significance of the one vital fact which alone can harmonise these two apparently contradictory facts. If we deduce that His being the Son of God implies that His nature was partly divine and therefore different from ours we are denying that He came in the flesh; on the other hand if we conclude that His nature must have been unclean and condemned because it was like ours’ - we are in effect denying that He was the Son of God. What is the solution” It is that the virgin birth accounts for the origin of His life, not for His nature- His physical being came from His mother and was therefore the same flesh and blood as hers, but His life came from God, not from a child of Adam. This is the great mystery revealed by the Gospel, so

wonderfully enlightening and logical when it is properly understood but so woefully destructive when it is misapplied.

This is the point - the purpose of the virgin birth was not to produce a man of superior nature, because such an one could not be said to be made in all points like His brethren - could not in fact be a true man at all. The purpose was to produce a man in a different legal position from all others, a man not under the condemnation brought into effect by Adam and passing upon all his children. I need not go further into this as it is fully dealt with in our literature and no doubt you are familiar with it, but I hope I have been able to explain how we look at this question of Jesus' nature. I shall be sending you a copy of Edward Turney's lecture when it is ready and he deals with it very fully and clearly, and if you keep in mind the distinction between physical flesh and the abstract conceptions of name and ownership I think you will soon pick your way through your difficulties.

Now I will deal with the particular passage you mentioned, namely Philippians 2:5, and explain how I think it should be understood. As you say, the translators and especially the N.E.B. leave no doubt of their view that it teaches that Jesus had a former existence in heaven, that He emptied Himself of divine nature in order to take on human nature and so on. I attach no importance whatsoever to any of them. Without exception, before they start their work of translation they are believers in some degree in Trinitarianism or that Jesus had divine nature, and consequently however honest their intentions any passage which will bear it will tend to be coloured with their view simply because they have never considered any other.

I quite enjoyed reading the N.E.B. but it falls very far short of being an accurate translation and in this place in particular it is a gloss which is quite unwarranted. There is not one atom of evidence in the original Greek for the translation, "the divine nature was His from the first" nor for the words "assuming the nature of a slave." There is no word in the Greek for nature, as you can verify from an interlinear word for word translation like the Diaglott, and our A.V. rendering "the form of God" and "for form of a servant" is far better. The very words of the second phrase ought to have warned them they were out of their depth, for why the "nature" of a slave? What is the difference between the nature of a slave and any other man? Divine nature may be a proper conception when it relates to God, but why set it against "the nature of a slave"? - why not the nature of man? The fact is, of course, that they could not do so because the Apostle had already spoken of this in the words (A.V.) "and being found in fashion as a man," or as they say, "made in the likeness of a man" - that is to say, when He was a man. He assumed the nature of a slave. How could He assume what He already had? The fact of the matter is there is nothing whatever about nature in the passage.

As in other matters, we can best get at the correct meaning of a passage by taking into account the argument or purpose of the whole passage. In Philippians 2 Paul is exhorting the members of the church to behave themselves as true Christians should and show the spirit of Christ, "Let this disposition be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Now I think you will agree that it would neither be to the point, nor helpful to his readers for Paul to introduce the question of Christ's physical nature at this point. On the contrary it would have been the worst sort of encouragement to the Philippians to manifest the mind of Christ if He had gone on to tell them that Jesus' nature was divine from the first and that He had only put it off temporarily. They would have said to themselves, as would any logical mind, such an one is no true pattern or example! How different, and how much more to the point, if Paul had drawn their attention to Jesus' high standing and pre-eminence as the Son of God and then reminded them that He had foregone His Just claim to the honour and authority of a Prince and had made Himself their servant? And this is in fact exactly what Paul did - he said nothing about divine nature at all.

The Authorised Version and the Emphatic Diaglott translate the word "*morphe*" as "form": it is only used 3 times and never to mean "nature" - this word nature, as in 2 Peter 1:4, "The divine nature" is "*phusis*" so that if this had been what Paul was speaking about in Philippians 2 this is the word he should have used and not "*morphe*." This word means form or appearance; the Dictionary says "Form - visible aspect; mode in which a thing exists or manifests itself; fashion or mould." This is certainly its proper meaning as used in this passage; we should say to-day probably "status" or "standing." It is a certain fact that never while on earth did Jesus have divine nature; but what He had, from His birth the status of Son of God. He was the heir of the world and the representative of His Father on earth. As He said to Philip, "Have I been so long with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This is the sense in

which He was in the form of God; and if He had chosen to put His own right first He was entitled to claim His inheritance and the protection of the angels, counting it not robbery to be equal with God - in the same sense as any son is of similar status to his father. But He did not do so; instead He made Himself of no reputation (again implying status and not nature, for reputation has to do with character and standing, not physical condition) and humbled Himself and became obedient unto the death of the Cross. He could not have done so had He not been as Paul says, "found in fashion as a man" or as the E.D. renders it "Made in the likeness of men." This is what was accomplished by His birth of Mary - it made Him the same flesh and blood corruptible human nature as His brothers and sisters and therefore capable of death but not destined to death. But being the only Begotten Son of God He inherited a status higher than the angels and a birthright which placed Him above all others - do you follow - not a higher nature but a higher name - just as the son of our monarch is the same flesh and blood as other men but legally their sovereign,

It was this high standing and reputation, belonging to Jesus by right, which he surrendered when He took upon Himself the form of a servant. As I see it, in Philippians Paul is only re-stating the teaching of Jesus when He washed the disciples' feet. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He was come from God, and went to God., Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet... For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." So when Paul speaks of Jesus as assuming the form of a servant in the example he gave, he is not suggesting that Jesus was formerly in some way part of the Deity in heaven but changed Himself into a man at His birth, nor that He was a mixture of divine nature and human nature; he was showing how Jesus in His life had humbled Himself from His high standing even to the loss of life itself as a condemned criminal in order to serve and to save mankind.

Amongst all the various aspects of error into which the Christadelphian doctrine of sinful flesh leads, I think perhaps this one is the worst, because it robs Christ of His honour. To believe that the purpose of His being begotten by God was to give Him a partially divine nature and thus to endow Him with the superior strength necessary to overcome temptation not only takes from Him all credit for His victory over sin but makes a mockery of God's justice in putting Him forward as our example.

If I have not cleared up any point to your satisfaction I hope you will let me know and I will try again. I am very pleased you are pursuing the subject and not allowing yourself to be frightened off it by the fact that the vast majority of Christadelphians seem to be untroubled by it. Some may be, but personally I think from things I have heard that many of the leaders know that the statement of faith is wrong but they cannot face the trouble that such an admission would cause, and they therefore satisfy themselves by what they term "mental reservations." You are fortunate in having men like Williams and Rowley available to talk to, and I hope you will keep in touch with them and discuss any problems you have with them - they have no axe to grind and neither have I - all that matters to us is the truth and if your aim is the same there can be no doubt about the outcome.

With sincere good wishes and prayers for your guidance, Yours in Jesus name, Ernest Brady. March 1962

Some Serious and Sobering Thoughts

"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." - Hebrews 1:1-2.

Two important facts of truth are contained in the above quotation,

- 1) That the word of God was spoken through the medium of His Son in greater detail and purpose for the benefit and enlightenment of the common people who heard Him gladly having for so long been under the teaching and vain traditions of the priests and rulers of their time.
- 2) When God created, or should I say. re-fashioned the earth which was without form and void, in darkness under water, His Plan was clear throughout every dispensation which would come and go. In that Plan, first

that which is natural, and after, that which is spiritual. In the natural were two of His Sons, Adam and Jesus. In the obedience test Adam failed and needed redemption and also reconciliation in order to remain alive having brought himself under the sentence of death by infliction legally, being already corruptible by creation.

The second Son was also begotten in the same corruptible nature of flesh and blood under which Adam was tested for character development by his Creator when placed in the Garden of Eden.

The Creator in His foreknowledge, knew that this second Son would justify His Father's condemnation of Adam's sin by demonstrating completely the obedience and respect required of His Father, and thus Jesus, in the words of the writer to the Hebrews, was appointed heir of all things and on His account the worlds or dispensations from the time of Adam were framed, i.e. Adam to Noah, from Noah-to Abraham; and Abraham to Moses, and Moses to Christ, then His glorification as High Priest at the right-hand of the Father - His return, His Kingdom and finally the gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him (Ephesians 1:9-10).

This is what the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 11 verse 3 intends us to understand and is not referring to the literal heaven and earth. As a matter of fact it did not demand faith for the Creator to establish the literal Heaven and Earth in that He is Spirit from eternity.

Thus when we read John 1:1-5 we are made aware of the beginning of the mission of Jesus the Son of God - a dispensation or world, made by him through the indwelling of the word of God, verse 10, "He was in the world and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth," (witnessed by John and others) as we read in 1 John 1:1-3, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)... and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

I hope that we can understand now more clearly what is meant by the various terms used in the Scriptures, i.e. "A new heaven and a new earth; "Heaven and earth shall pass away," - "The world passeth away and the lust thereof," (I John 2:16-17) "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;" (Hence my belief that the flood was limited to the area of where the ungodly had spread to) (2 Peter 2:5) "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:6-7). A reading of Hebrews 11:3 from the Emphatic Diaglott and comments at foot of page 151 will help no doubt.

In our Circular Letter No 19" Sep/Oct 2002 an article was published by a critique of Christadelphian teaching. Matthew J.Slick, which, were he not a Trinitarian and believer in Jesus as a pre-existent part of it styled deity, his whole case almost to the bottom of page 19 would have been a good one as far as Jesus and His sacrifice was concerned, but the problem is that he joins Christadelphians on the doctrine of defiled fallen nature known as the Doctrine of Original Sin. He fails to see that if Jesus was of the seed of Abraham and David then He had the same physical quality of flesh as ail other men but sadly he uses the term for that as "sinful flesh" instead of the correct translation rendered "Sin's Flesh" denoting the relationship or possessive case, his use of the term "Likeness" then makes complete sense without altering the fact that the flesh and blood of Jesus was physically the same as all Adam's posterity and nowhere in Genesis does it say Adam's nature was defiled, fallen or changed - only his legal and moral relationship through breach of Divine Law.

Thus we find in the teaching of Jesus and His revelation to Paul that God in His Love and Mercy spared Adam from the inflicted death-by-sin he had incurred, and by imputation concluded all his posterity in his loins as under that one sin, that by One man not under Sin the penalty or debt to the law could be paid. Jesus, that one man not in the loins of Adam though of the identical flesh of Adam at creation was God's possession and not "Sin's flesh" but free from the Law of Sin and Death and qualified to be free to give His life as a Ransom for all to purchase them from under the law of sin and death, a legal not a physical position.

It is law which establishes a man's position or relationship with the Creator, not the quality of his flesh which from creation is neutral. It is unlawful conduct which defiles the conscience and reveals the character as sinful, the flesh remains unaltered: this "sinful" or "fallen-nature" term is a myth originated by man's imagination.

Now we can see the point in Mr Slick's criticism of Christadelphian teaching on the sacrifice of Christ - that one under "sin-defiled nature" could not be a fit sacrifice to take away sin, and is shown in the animal types under the law of Moses - perfect in every sense of their species but not under law, their typical life in the blood given and allowed of God to make Atonement for the soul, But as the Apostle stated, "It was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin," as it was a human under Law who had sinned and brought men under an imputed legal sentence of death, and human life was the debt owed to the law, a debt that could be paid by one whose life was not in pledge or forfeited to sin.

If Mr Slick had seen and understood the legal position he would have had a better case against the Christadelphian teaching but in regard to Adam's posterity he is in agreement with them on defiled "sin-nature" or "sin in the flesh" but they themselves putting Christ in the same position, which he does not want to do, thus he is forced to invent a nature known only to himself, for Scripture will not substantiate such a theory.

Certainly he exposes the unscriptural views of Christadelphian teaching regarding sin or the devil in human nature and their application of it to Christ, being of the same nature. This they link to Hebrews 2:14 and Hebrews 9:26; Jesus being of the flesh and blood nature of His brethren and as they falsely assume, having the devil or sin in His flesh, by His inflicted death destroyed him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14), also that once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).

If this is what was required to put away sin then we can all commit suicide but this does not destroy that which has the power of death in that the power of death is a legal sentence hanging over all who are concluded under the "death by sin" of Adam, not the common death as a result of creation. Why not be honest and consistent with Scripture and accept that Christ sacrificed His own natural life in the blood for us and not for Himself? To teach the latter is to make of non effect Hebrews 9:28 and Hebrews 10:1-23; it does not say in verse 28 that the Jews and Romans offered up Jesus on the tree of Calvary to bear the sins of the many. No, the Apostle Paul spoke the truth, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

And Jesus Himself said. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16,17). The Christadelphian teaching has been for over 120 years that God sent His Son to die as an exhibition of His condemnation of the flesh: whereas the Scriptures teach the opposite, which is. That an equivalent life Adam forfeited to the Law by sin was necessary to pay that debt. And Jesus willingly did just that for all, though all do not avail themselves of such a gracious Gift.

Nowhere in Genesis do we read that God condemned human flesh. He condemned the sin which Adam and other men committed while in bodies of flesh capable of obedience to His Will.

Therefore, in conclusion while not in agreement with all the views of Matthew J. Slick. I find his statement at the bottom of page 19 (C.L.197) most appropriate - "Because the Christadelphians teach that Jesus had a fallen and sinful nature, their faith is in a defiled and imperfect sacrifice. It is therefore, insufficient. They are lost."

P.Parry.
(10th October 2002).

I have received a reply from Brother Brian Bloomfield in response to my letter reported on page 18 of our last C.L. in which he gives his views after reading “Too True To Be New.” While again not printing B’s letter I replied to him as follows:-

Dear Brian, Thank you for your letter and I very much appreciate the trouble you have been to in considering your reply.

There are a few of your observations I wish to respond to and perhaps the best way for me to start is to set out very briefly what I believe to be the plan of God for mankind and if I appear to make several assumptions on the way, I hope all will be clear before the end of the letter.

Firstly, God is the Creator, He is Almighty, He is perfect and He is Love. In the beginning He created man in His own image; and that tells me Adam had the capacity to reason with God. He gave Adam a Law - and law gives choice. Yes, it is as simple as that - it is Law that gives choice. Once Adam had been given a Law he could choose to either obey God or he could disobey. Sin is disobedience of God’s Law. As sin is the breaking of God’s law it must therefore be counted a legal matter. Sin has nothing to do with the quality of the flesh. Adam disobeyed God while in his “very good” flesh; sin did not change that flesh which remained “very good.” What did change was Adam’s relationship to his Creator. He had sold himself into the bondage of Sin. He was now a servant of “Sin” as a Master and no longer considered a servant of God. He was now mortal and as this is a legal matter it did not change the quality of Adam’s flesh in any way.

Adam had been put on probation for eternal life when given the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For this purpose God created him of a “very good” nature. Adam did not have the right to eternal life - that depended, by the grace of God, on the outcome of his probation. Nor did Adam have “some unique form of life unknown to any other man.” The Scriptures only mention natural life and spiritual life. Adam had natural life. He was made like the animals with a natural body which needed food and drink; Adam and Eve had bodies which could reproduce to bring forth children as did all animals in producing young, and they were all, both man and animals, corruptible in their physical make-up. They would have experienced life and death in the natural world around them. The whole eco-system requires the succession of life and death and we have no reason to suppose Adam and Eve were exceptions from it, though I believe that they were given protection from mishaps while in Eden. Natural death is the natural end to a natural life.

Adam was God’s son by creation. He failed in his probation when he ate of the forbidden tree. Yes, it was rebellion but it was not a heinous crime but an easy mistake for an inexperienced man to make. God had said that in the day he ate of the tree he would die, i.e. he would cease to exist in that very day. I am sure Adam would understand what was meant. God didn’t deceive him. This was a putting to death on the very day he sinned and was not a natural death sometime in the future. This is proven by the use of the same expression, “dying thou shall die,” used elsewhere in scripture, e.g. 1 Kings 2:37 - Solomon told Shimei “that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die” or “dying thou shall die.” If natural death was meant then this would have been no threat to Shimei, so it is surely obvious that a ‘putting to death’ on the day he disobeyed is what Shimei understood. Indeed this is what happened just as soon as was humanly possible after Shimei disobeyed.

God had asked perfection of Adam because God is perfect and nothing imperfect can exist with Him. While God asked perfection of Adam there was no forgiveness offered to him in Eden should he fail. I do not think God was being harsh in this matter, because quite unknown to Adam, God already had a plan in place knowing Adam would fail. That plan we now know was that God’s only begotten Son was to be “the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world” to “take away the sin of the world” as we are told by John the Baptist.

But Adam was not put to death in the day he sinned. Instead, God provided a lamb for a covering over of his sin. This is characteristic of God who is great in mercy and it is by His grace that we too can be forgiven. God spared Adam and Eve and they continued to live out their natural life span which, for Adam was some 930 years.

Although God had said that Adam would die in the very day he sinned, yet we see Adam was spared, we also find there were other occasions when God said one thing and did another as when He told Jonah to go and tell Nineveh that He would destroy that town in forty days. There was no offer of reprieve if they repented, yet when they did repent we find God spared Nineveh and Jonah was angry because God had not carried out His threat! (Jonah 3:10 to 4:2). Again, Hezekiah was told to set his house in order for he would surely die. Yet when he pleaded with God, his life was extended by fifteen years. (Isaiah 20:1 and 6). Such cases as these show God's merciful kindness, and so it was with Adam and Eve.

The serpent did say "Thou shalt not surely die" but the serpent had no knowledge of God's pending forgiveness and could not have spoken with any authority. Yet what the serpent said was still a lie because those who remain sinners will most certainly die and this is what was denied by the serpent.

You say that "God provided them with an acceptable covering." As the covering was provided by God it was certainly acceptable to Him, but what was covered? Was it not their sin that was covered over? And if this was the case, were they not forgiven, and if forgiven, should they then still suffer the punishment for their sin? I trow not. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Romans 4:8).

We are in total agreement with "the scriptural principle of personal responsibility set forth in Ezekiel 33:13" and that it "cannot be brushed aside." God is never going to let the wicked go free, but the repentant sinners - those who turn from their wickedness and seek the Lord their God - shall live by the grace of God, and that Grace of God is the subject we have in hand, even Salvation through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that "without shedding of blood is no forgiveness." Throughout the Old Testament, including Adam, forgiveness required the shedding of the blood of animals; these sacrifices were designed to bear the sins of the people so that the people didn't die, and they were types of the Great Antitype to follow. It was not the blood of those animals that carried away their sins but Jesus Christ whom they represented - He carried their sins and bear their iniquities (Hebrews 10:11, Isaiah 53) and in Him alone are they all borne away. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." In this statement Jesus sums up His mission - He was the Corn of Wheat to fall into the ground and die, "Not for Himself" (Daniel 9:26) but for others.

Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans that the law of sin and death entered with the sin of Adam (Romans 5:12) but he also goes on to tell us "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life... so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous... even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:18-21). Here we have the federal principle explained by Paul. All in Adam are brought under condemnation. Galatians 3:22, "the scripture hath concluded all under sin..." And why were they concluded under sin? It was so "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." All in Jesus Christ are freed from that condemnation and come under grace. All who come out of Adam are freed from the condemnation and accept the "promise by faith of Jesus Christ" and are hence "in Christ" and not "in Adam." All in Adam are under the law of sin and death. All in Jesus Christ are under the law of Grace. We come out from under the law of sin and death by baptism into Christ's death by which we come under the law of Grace instead.

Paul also explains that by being under the Law of Grace we are no longer in the flesh but in the spirit. He is not saying that we are no longer flesh and blood creatures but by the Grace of God we are no longer subject to the law of sin and death and that "we have passed from death unto life;" (1 John 3:14) that we shall not come into condemnation (adverse judgment). "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." (Revelation 20:6).

Adam was forgiven as is seen by the slain lamb which provided a covering for his sin. If he was thus forgiven why should he also suffer for his sin? He was put into changed conditions or circumstances as a result of his sin but whether or not we can call this a punishment is debatable. Forgiveness should be complete. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," for "if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:12 & 14,15). When forgiveness is provided then there can be no further punishment for that sin. Yet we do sometimes see a change in circumstances as when David committed adultery with Bathsheba. "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13) but his life changed afterwards in that "the sword shall never depart from thine house..." (verse 10). This

seems to me to be the case with Adam and Eve. They were forgiven but were driven out of their paradise to live in a world where the ground was cursed for their sake. It was not their flesh that was cursed. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that flesh is cursed. It was their right to life as the reward for perfect obedience that was lost.

Your observation that “Ernest Brady’s conjecture about men being ‘so created that that they were physically incapable of obedience (p6)...’” is the teaching commonly believed amongst Christadelphians who are supposed “to suffer all the effects which came by Adam’s transgression” (B.A.S.F. Clause 10), “A sentence which defiled and became a physical law of their being, and is transmitted to all his posterity.” (B.S.A.F. Clause 5). As a result of this supposed defilement of sin in the flesh it is taught that perfect obedience to God’s laws is not possible. Personally, I see this as false humility; certainly we have all failed, but we do not need to keep on failing. There is no commandment which we are forced to break. So I agree with you that there is nothing in scripture to suggest we are so created that we are physically incapable of obedience, so why is it the commonly held belief of Christadelphians?

The fact that we are able to keep the commandments even as Jesus did does not take away from Jesus’ victory over temptation. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 6:48). I feel we ought to see temptation, not as our problem but as our opportunity to serve God as we ought. The fact is we do not - Jesus did.

I agree it is quite impossible for us to achieve a level of obedience by which we can justify ourselves. This is not because we cannot be perfectly obedient but because we are all concluded under the sin of Adam. This is not a bad thing but a good thing, for it is God’s ‘federal’ arrangement for our salvation that we should be saved through faith and not through works.

I must now refer to Romans 7 where it appears Paul is speaking about his present position yet this seems to be the result of a bias in the translators, for the change to the present tense is unwarranted as most scholars will now admit. The original Greek does not require the present tense and the reason it was changed part way through this discourse can only be because the translators had the doctrine of Original Sin in mind. Verse 1 of chapter 8 requires that what went before it should be in the past tense because Paul writes “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And why is it that there is now no condemnation? It is because they “walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” The whole of Paul’s argument separates the time before conversion - ours or his - in contrast to the time after conversion. The contrast between the time of walking after the desires of the flesh and the time of walking after the desires of the Spirit. No one can do both together.

Psalm 80:17 reads “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou hast made strong for thyself.” There is no doubt that the “son of man” refers to Christ Jesus. The question is. How was Christ Jesus made strong for God? The answer lies in the fact that Jesus was God’s Son and heir of all things- But before I enlarge on this point let us realise that Jesus was made in all points like unto His brethren in His flesh and blood make up, and He was tempted in all points like as they are, facing all the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life as they do. In these respects He had no advantage over anyone else to enable Him to overcome temptation. The advantages He had as the Son of God must be weighed against the extra responsibilities His Heirship carried. However, He was the second Adam who came into the world by the determinate counsel of God to do what the first Adam failed to do and then to restore what was lost by the first Adam. We know that the first Adam lost his right to life through disobedience, and we know that the second Adam did not lose His right to life, and this is because He was obedient. Since all Adam’s posterity are concluded under the sin of Adam it follows therefore that Jesus, the second Adam was not included in the first Adam’s posterity, for had He been included in Adam’s posterity then He would not have been born with His right to life. What we are saying here is that Jesus, because He had His life direct from His Father without going through the line of Adam, was not under condemnation; that He did not have to die for Himself; that He was related to the human race through His mother, Mary and therefore of the line of David and Abraham. Thus He was the only person since Adam whom God made strong for Himself in putting Him in the position of being free to give His life as the ransom price for many.

A few final points: - I have no wish to defend Ernest Brady's style, however, he was very meticulous in his reasoning and always prepared to cover the same ground in different ways again and again for anyone who failed to follow his arguments the first time.

I must refer to the texts in Job dealing with "unclean flesh" and which you say have been ignored. This is not the case since they are irrelevant. These passages in Job have been misunderstood and misapplied far too long. Two Hebrew words are used, Job who "spoke that which was right", used the word *tabor* while the two 'liars,' Eliphaz and Bildad, who spoke falsely of YHWH used the word *zakah*. *Tahor* refers to ceremonial uncleanness as applied to men which is a temporary matter, while *zakah* refers to moral uncleanness. Neither have any connection with the physical flesh and cannot be applied to support the notion of sinful flesh.

Regarding your observation that the Roman Catholic doctrine of so-called immaculate conception underlies the difference between the Christadelphian understanding and the Roman Catholic understanding of changed flesh I rather believe confirms my point. The doctrine of immaculate conception avoids attaching to Jesus Christ the stigma of sin in the flesh while the Christadelphians have no such qualms but would make "His body as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died." (Elpis Israel p.128). While I have no record of the Roman Catholic version of the doctrine of Original Sin I have copied out below the Church of England version to put alongside its echo - i.e. Clause 5 of the B.A.S.F.

Article 9 of the C of E 39 Articles reads:-

"Of Original or Birth-Sin. Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam: 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 this 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, called in the Greek, *phronema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptised, yet concupiscence and the lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

B.A.S.F. Clause 5 reads:-

"That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity."

In your derogation of man you quote Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." But this chapter 17 of Jeremiah shows contrasts between those whose "sin... is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars" (v.1), and "blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." (v.7). Verse 9 which you quote applies to the former, not to the latter. Do you still apply it to yourself?

Again Psalm 14 quoted by Paul in Romans 3:9-12 starts by saying (v.1) "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." It is of these fools that the Psalmist says "they are corrupt... none that doeth good, no not one... all have gone aside."

While Ecclesiastes 7:20 reads "For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." This is saying that even the just and good are not without sin.

Then you say that "Jesus endorsed this assessment of man when He rejected the use of the term "good" to Himself (Luke 18:19) and said "none is good save one, that is God." But Jesus was saying in fact that He and His Father were one; that He is the Good Shepherd; that out of the good treasure of His heart He brought forth good things. He never at any time said He was other than good.

While in Ezekiel 4:6 God counts a day to represent a year and in Psalm 90:4 the Psalmist counts a day with man as a thousand years with the Lord, neither of them are sufficient evidence that God meant other than a day of twenty-four hours when He told Adam that if he ate of the forbidden tree he would die that very day. There is no reason for us to suppose that Adam understood a day to mean a millennial day.

I used to think that mortal and corruptible were interchangeable terms but I found I was mistaken. Corruptible relates to the physical body which is capable of dying and corrupting back to earth from whence it was taken, while mortal is a legal term relating to ones position in regard to the Law of God. It is a condemnation to death. Adam was created corruptible but became mortal when he sinned when his relationship changed from being a son of God to being a servant of sin and by it being subject to death by Law. Having said that, the meaning of mortal has changed over the years and its present usage is very wide; but in theological terms as used in scripture that did not used to be the case.

Furthermore the death penalty upon Adam was that he should die a violent death and this alone accounts for the violent death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. If natural death was to be the penalty for sin then Jesus only need have died a natural death to take away sin.

I do hope I have made my understanding clear. It is because of this understanding that we have felt it necessary to leave the Christadelphian community. We know of many who hold, to some extent, similar views to ours and yet remain amongst the Christadelphians and we are certain there are also many more who are not known to us. It is because we love our former brethren and sisters and learnt so much of the scriptures whilst in their midst that we feel it necessary to cry aloud and spare not whenever and wherever we see views expressed which are not according to the Word of God.

With Love in the Lord, Russell Gregory.

We reproduce a short letter from a Mr Alex Milne, the subject of which is God-manifestation, sent to the Editor of "The Christadelphian Magazine" in March 1962, following which is a reply by Helen:

Dear Brother Carter, How is it so many Christadelphian writers keep off the Divine side of Christ? Are they afraid of the oft repeated and so often false cry of "Trinitarianism" or "clean flesh"?

We still have to get Dr.Thomas and R. Roberts to expound this side of the question. Certainly we see nothing to-day of the calibre of "God manifest in flesh" in "Eureka," Vol. 1, or "Christ more than man" by R.Roberts. The short article, "Never man spake like this man" by R.R. in the December Magazine also comes to mind.

There was a likeness, a sameness to his brethren of the seed of Abraham, the best and most noble of them all, not the lowest. "Tempted in all points without sin" does not mean to all degrees like the vilest sinner.

In Christ's make-up there was a sameness and a difference. Had there been no difference there would have been no acceptable sacrifice, and no salvation. The difference was in mental and moral strength which was His as a result of His Divine fraternity – God was in Christ" is an all sufficient explanation.

Sincerely yours, brother Alex Milne. Hastings, New Zealand.

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In response, Sister Helen Brady wrote:-

Dear Mr. Milne, I read your letter in the March Christadelphian magazine about the divine side of Christ's nature but I cannot agree with your explanation of the subject and I wondered if you would consider another viewpoint.

If, as you say, the only difference between Christ and ourselves was the mental and moral strength which He received direct from God to enable Him to overcome temptations - why was it necessary for Him to be the Son of God at all? Do you not think had God been merely concerned to provide a sacrifice who lived a perfectly obedient life, He could not have chosen a man already living and equip him with this special strength and power? We certainly read in the Bible of men who pleased God by their complete obedience to His commands and Enoch at least was rewarded by never seeing death. We too, are exhorted "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father..." and where is there a commandment we cannot obey? Yet if your views are correct, Christ was the only one who could overcome and obey because He was the Son of God and received a special strength, and as we do not we can never obey and yet as I have said, we read of men who did in fact succeed in obeying, so were they not as "different" or "divine" as Christ was? All this rather suggests to me that something more than perfection of character was required for a fit sacrifice, although obviously this was an essential requirement also.

To talk about a "divine side" of Christ's nature will inevitably suggest an improbable half-God-half-man being and however distasteful it is to you it is inescapably Christadelphian Trinitarianism.

Christadelphians are no different from the rest of Christendom in their complete ignorance of the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ. They just do not know the real reason why Jesus was the Son of God and can only summon the feeble explanation that it was to enable Him to be specially strengthened. They conveniently ignore the fact that this doctrine completely robs Christ of all the glory and honour so much His due and simply makes Him a puppet manipulated by God and quite devoid of freewill.

I hope you have borne with me this far, because now I want to try to explain as briefly and clearly as possible what I believe to be the truth about Christ, His nature and sacrifice.

Adam received his life from God and was told if he ate of a certain tree he would be put to death that day. He disobeyed and but for God's mercy he would have been put to death but this would have meant the end of the human race. When Adam sinned he was alienated from God which was typified by his banishment from Eden. He was a sinner who owed a debt to his God, so all Adam's descendants were born in the same state, alienated in debt or in bondage.

Jesus received His life from God not from a man descended from Adam and thus was a new creation as Adam had been in the beginning, and Jesus therefore was free from the bondage which included all other men, but He was related to the race which He was to redeem because He was born of Mary. He had to have an identical nature in order to prove that obedience is possible. By perfect obedience He retained His right to the life He received, and was thus in a position to give that which belonged to Him - His life - as the ransom price of his brother Adam, who, in parallel circumstances lost his right to life by sin. It was a violent death incurred in Eden and it was a violent death which Jesus suffered.

I am enclosing a book by Edward Turney written many years ago about these things. Do please read it, and I should be more than pleased to hear from you with your comments about this letter and the pamphlet.

Yours sincerely, Helen Brady.
(March 1962)

To Whom It May Concern

CREATION - GENESIS CHAPTER 1

This first chapter of Genesis gives a preview of what the Creator did from the first day to the end of the sixth day but the details we find are more concise in the following chapters. They tell us what God did on each day of an evening and morning duration which Adam would understand by experience. Adam did not have the company of King David to tell him how long a day lasted neither does any intelligent reader of Genesis, it is plain enough in Chapter I verses 12,13, the fruit trees were there for food on the third day but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life were not accessible on the third day.

Why? Because God had not at that time or day planted the Garden eastward in Eden where the two important trees were to be situated for certain reasons.

The reasons being a test of belief and faith in what God required of the man and woman, the responsibility being placed on the man firstly, whom He had placed in the Garden - the man passing the information on to his wife and companion after her presentation to him in the Garden. God's edict to Adam - "In the day thou eatest of the forbidden fruit thou shalt surely die." "Surely die" is the term used in the Old Testament record to mean inflicted death for the despiser of God's law and grace, whether Jew or Gentile as the case may be. God needs no one to manipulate His word to Adam that it means a thousand years, neither that in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit that this created a change in his flesh. We might justify the question "Did Adam eat of it for a thousand years? No, the Genesis record will not allow this, he ate of it once and became a sinner of guilty conscience not of changed flesh. The words of David in Psalm 90 were not expressed to justify the fact that God meant a day of a thousand years; It had nothing to do with the penalty upon Adam, it is the inability of some people to appreciate that the Giver of the law is superior to it and can change it; even the Kings of Media and Persia could alter the laws of their dominion though it was said they could not be altered or changed; see the book of Esther for proof of this, though we find much evidence in the Old Testament that God changed His mind by virtue of the attributes revealed to Moses in the Mount, we do not have to Justify God's attitude toward man, it is He that justifies us, on condition of belief and faith in the providing of His Son (Romans 5:1).

Incidentally, the marginal reference to Ezekiel 18:4 taken from Romans 5:12 has no connection with Adam's sin and death and the same death sentence that passed upon all men who had not, nor could not sin by responsibility while in the loins of Adam. Ezekiel 18 applied to men and women who were under the law given through Moses but nevertheless were of the same flesh and blood nature which Adam had when placed in the Garden of Eden.

It was said to them that if they sinned by the law they would die by it in the manner stated, but if they kept the law, they would live and would not die, yet they died by natural death even though they kept the law, proving that natural death did not operate by legal means. Therefore when God says through Ezekiel "The soul that sinneth it shall die," He does not mean by natural, gradual decay, but by infliction causing the shedding of blood, involving loss of life in a short time. Although the statement is taken out of its context, I know that Christadelphians use it to counter the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and unwittingly they concede that Adam being a living soul at his creation was of the same nature as those people described in Ezekiel 18. Then we find them in word and literature contradicting this very fact. Not corruptible nor incorruptible, but a (very good) nature strange to the apostle Paul and the Scriptures also.

The Apostle Paul says, "The first man Adam was made a 'living soul,' but Christadelphians say he was made a 'dying soul;' through sin their Adam cannot be the first man but the second! - a man of condemned nature (Clause V of the B.A.S.F.), a violation of Scripture.

It may seem discourteous for me to say it, but I find from the recent correspondence and the past and present literature of Christadelphians in general, that they have placed themselves in a position of having no hope. This is because they will not accept the sacrificial death of Christ in the place of the judicial death passed upon Adam for his sin and imputed to all in his loins, not because they sinned personally, but that they also might come to enlightenment of the Atoning work of God in His Son and embrace the salvation offered.

Because of their belief that natural decay and ultimate death was the penalty, this very fact is the stumbling block to their correct understanding of substitution, a fact that began in Eden and taught and shown under the Law of Moses.

Make no mistake about it, if the death Adam experienced at the age of 930 years was the penalty for his sin then there is no hope of a resurrection of life for him, but mark this - if you also believe natural death to be the penalty, you must agree that this is the mode of death that passed upon all men - and you die as you believe Adam must have died with the sentence of death untaken away. The question arises then. "why are you immersed into the death of Christ believing that when you die naturally that this is the penalty for imputed sin or actual sin not having been taken away on account that you will not accept substitution as

explained in the Old Testament and the New? Jesus did not die to prevent us dying a natural death, but to redeem or purchase us from under the death which passed upon all men if we choose by belief, understanding and faith to accept Him as "The Lamb of God" who took away Adam's sin and can also take away ours in like manner by the shedding of His blood, not for Himself, but for you and me.

Otherwise I cannot believe you can read Paul's epistle to the Colossians with any correct understanding (See Colossians chapter 3). How could Paul say to the Colossians believers "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" if they had not died in some way different from natural death? And how could they at His appearing appear with Him in glory if He had not become their life by dying for them and they dying in symbol by baptism into His sacrificial death and risen with Him.

Yet some people have not and will not accept the fact of the substitutional death of Christ even though He was the Antitype of the animals under the Edenic and Mosaic dispensations. They would rather, as I learned recently from a certain correspondent, use a passage of Scripture concerning God's appointment of days for years for His stated purpose with Israel at the time, than accept God's ordinance of the evening and morning as being the first day (Genesis chapter 1). The quoted reference, Ezekiel 4:6 having no bearing on what God said to Adam in Eden, or He would have explained it to him as He did to Ezekiel, at least this is my opinion of the Creator.

The Apostle Peter uses the words of David in Psalm 90:4 to show how long-suffering God is and because men have such a limited existence and want His promises fulfilled quickly to suit their own circumstances and trials, he declares that God is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness but is longsuffering having in mind those yet to embrace salvation as appointed in His foreknowledge, yet not willing that any should perish but that all might turn to Him and live, Under the circumstances that many fail to understand the reason for the sacrificial death of Christ, we also should be longsuffering toward them as I know we have been hitherto- Amen.

Brother P.Parry.

What has PACIFISM to do with our beliefs?

When I was a medical student in the fifties I used to spend one or two lunchtimes each month standing near the entrance to the Union Cafeteria selling "PEACEMAKER," a pacifist newspaper. To help sales I had constructed a placard which read:-

PEACEMAKER

Pacifist Monthly Publication. 3d.

PACIFIST PLEDGE:

I renounce War, and will never support nor sanction another. War degrades patriotism into a hypocrisy that is not patriotism. War breeds lying propaganda, unreasoning hate, atrocities. War is a Frankenstein monster, taking toil of just & unjust, innocent & guilt, fighting soldiers and innocent children, indiscriminately.

War is the supreme atrocity.

Wars will cease when men refuse to fight.

PACIFIST PROPOSITION;

The Means is NOT justified by the End.

The use of evil means will inevitably divert the progress of a movement from the ideal it seeks. No cause, however good, justifies the use of evil means, such as inaccurate propaganda, coercion, or violence, especially the violence of modern total war.

PACIFIST PROGRAMME.

To Overcome Evil With Good

To denounce exploitation, greed, indifference, the poison pen and tongue, and fight them consistently by the non-violent method. To neither give offence nor take offence, in the domestic sphere & the international.

To turn enemies into friends, & not to kill. To refuse to comply with evil laws (such as conscription) & accept the consequences.

To preach the brotherhood of mankind, and that war is a total loss, materially and morally, to victors and defeated alike.

I did not manage to sell many of the papers, maybe half a dozen or so each month. I should point out that I had not then heard of the Nazarene Fellowship; my father was a keen Christadelphian but I had not joined them; I had been greatly influenced by a outstanding Anglican preacher, and during the forties war I had taken the pacifist stance. I must also admit that I did not always live up to the ideals expressed in my poster.

Now, what has this pacifism to do with our beliefs?

Jesus said: "Love your neighbour as yourself." That's easy, Lord. My neighbours are nice people and we get on well with each other. We enjoy each other's friendship. No Problems.

Jesus said: "Love your enemies." Hey, wait a minute Lord' Enemies are horrible people; traitors, backstabbers, swindlers, slanderers, hateful types. Surely you are not serious Lord?

What would be Jesus' reply? - "I told you ages ago, turn the other cheek, go a second mile, do good to those that hurt you, pray for those that spitefully use you. Did you think I wasn't serious? If so, you had better also think I wasn't serious about my promises"!

My father was strongly insistent that Christadelphians are not pacifist; they refuse to fight simply because they were not of this world, and Jesus had not commanded His followers to fight, but to be "not of this world." Jesus said: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. But my Kingdom is not of this world." Exactly' What Christadelphians fail to understand is that His Kingdom could never possibly be of this unregenerate world. If it were, then Jesus, Son of God would be of the same calibre as Jesus BarAbbas, which we know He certainly never was. And I maintain that His teaching is pure pacifism, which we, His followers are enjoined to practise unconditionally in this probationary life. That is a tall order, and we may stumble many times, but we should diligently and prayerfully persevere. What our instructions will be in the Kingdom we don't yet know, but we can be confident that they will be good instructions. Meanwhile we are pacifists, wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This is not an ideal to think about. This is not a choice to try out when we feel inclined. This is not an option; it is a mandate, it is the 'Boss's Orders.' We have to stop feeling hateful or spiteful when we feel that it is necessary, but must learn to love our enemies. Love (*agape*) in this context does not mean affection, the Greek has a different word for that, rather it means respect and honour, and if that is done sincerely, then sooner or later affection will also enter the equation. Jesus is the Archetype; while we were yet sinners He went to His death for us to free us from sin and to bring us into the love of God. Near the end of His ministry, Jesus instructed His disciples, "I have a new commandment for you. It is this: love each other as I have loved you. Your love for each other will set you apart as my followers."

J. Stevenson. (9:11:02)
80 Burke Street. Maryborough. Victoria. Australia

MISCELLENAE

We are most grateful for all the letters we receive but we are not always able to make use of them in the Circular Letters for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they are very brief as when one correspondent wrote “I do not agree with your doctrinal position, neither do I agree with some of the more extreme positions of Robert Roberts at all. Please stop sending me your information as I believe you can use your resources better.” This writer gave us no indication as to why he did not agree with R.Roberts doctrinal position nor yet with ours, apparently quite content to hide his light “under a bushel,” and neither was he prepared to tell us how we might be able to use our resources better “that they which come in may see the light.” (Luke 11:33). But Jesus is the Light of the world and this is the light we wish to show to all who will accept Him. In some respects we perhaps feel a little like Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians: “And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it neither yet now are able. For are ye not carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

And was there ever a body so divided as the Christadelphians? A Christadelphian told me the other day there were at least 26 divisions, yet all claiming to preach the Truth and not agreeing what that Truth is, even to the point of refusing to acknowledge certain groups as being in the Truth and refusing to meet with one another around the table of the Lord? “This is the Lord’s table - you are not wanted here.” Zeal is one thing but such envying, strife and quarrels over whose zeal is the best in God’s sight ought not to be.

Another writer sent a brief note saying, “Thank you for your magazine. It is wonderful to be able to read the gospel which makes sense adding joy to faith rather than the confusing “statement” I was given at baptism.” It is letters like this which give us immeasurable joy. We know that it is only one here and one there who will receive the gospel message and all these are known to God. By the grace of God our desire and purpose is to spread the gospel message as widely as we are able, knowing He will give the increase as He sees good for He is not willing that any should perish.

Another reason we are not able to use some letters is because the writers do not wish them to be published and this we must respect, yet in them we see matters which we feel need a wider airing and one or two of these I wish to deal with here.

Corruptible and Mortal. In replying to one writer who hadn’t followed our reasoning, I said it appears we have not made sufficient distinction in our Circular Letters between mortal and corruptible. I wonder how many Christadelphians confuse the two? Even as a fourth generation Christadelphian and after forty years in that community I did not see the difference between these two matters - and it didn’t seem important anyway. What a fog I was in! Even after my resignation was demanded of me I wrote an open letter to all members of the ecclesia in which I confused mortal and corruptible, yet not a single recipient seemed to notice. As a Nazarene I would say the difference is vital and elementary to an understanding of the Atonement and herein lies the parting of the ways between the Nazarene and Christadelphian teachings - between truth and error.

Let me explain. Corruption as used in Scripture regarding mankind is correctly understood as the return of the body to the dust after death. God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and this body is corruptible because when life departs the body it returns to dust. Corruptibility then applies to the physical body, to our flesh; we have a corruptible nature. Corruptible relates to all life forms, plant and animal - when life is no longer in the plant or animal, it returns to the dust of the ground. “Man hath no pre-eminence above a beast;” “as one dieth so dieth the other.” (Ecclesiastes 3:19).

Mortal on the other hand is not so clearly understood and would seem to mean different things to different people; neither does the dictionary help us very much because the word is used in so many ways in this modern age.

In 1 Timothy 6:16 we read that God “only hath immortality.” We know too that He gave immortality to the angels and has promised the same to the saints. We see at once that mortality refers to life, but life,

whether of angels or saints, cannot exist without a body - "This corruptible must put on incorruption (the body), and this mortal must put on immortality (the life)." (1 Corinthians 15:53).

God is Spirit not flesh and blood, so we say He is immortal because He has immortal life but it would be inappropriate to say He has an incorruptible nature for He has no physical body. (If this is doubted, what did God create?)

Adam was created with a body made of the dust of the ground and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Adam was made corruptible but not mortal; his life was not under condemnation at the beginning - it was free of condemnation and this freedom was dependent upon his obedience. When he transgressed he lost that free life and became the servant of sin, i.e. he became mortal or under condemnation, for that is what mortal means - Greek, *thnetos* = liable to die, or cause to be put to death. (See Strong's). We see this as a legal term, for Adam was brought under condemnation for breaking God's Law. Adam's right to life was lost through disobedience but by the grace of God he was allowed to continue in mortal life, not in the free life he had before.

This legal position of condemnation which we read of in Romans 5:18, "therefore indeed as through one offence, sentence came unto ail men unto condemnation," was passed on to all Adam's posterity and while some have said that this was our misfortune, the Scriptures says it was for our salvation - Galatians 3:22, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." This is the only change that can be deduced from the Genesis account, the change from a life not under condemnation to a life under condemnation, and this condemnation is what has been passed on to all except Jesus Christ who had a life free of condemnation direct from His Father- When we say Jesus was not mortal we are saying in effect that He had a free life. A fact denied in the B.A.S.F.

My correspondent asked "What is the nature that is not mortal, but yet can die, or experience death?" We answer - mortal does not apply to the body but to the life in the body, which life is under condemnation until it is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3). Then my correspondent quoted 2 Corinthians 4:11, "...that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" and to which we might add Romans 8:11, "shall also quicken your mortal bodies." In each of these places 'mortal' appears as an adjective qualifying the noun 'flesh' or 'body' when from the above it should qualify 'life.' The answer lies in the fact that our life cannot function without the body and Paul in each case is saying in effect that Christ "quicken" (*zoopoieo*) our 'body of mortal life.' The Greek word meaning to 'enliven with immortal life,' as distinct from psuche or natural life.

The above I believe shows the all important distinction between corruptible and mortal, in which we see also the reason for Jesus having a life free of mortality or condemnation, a life of His own possession which He could give willingly to gain free life for us.

Jesus "died unto sin once: (died not for His sin but for ours), 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. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." (Romans 6:10-12).

Changed Flesh? Another matter which is repeatedly broached in correspondence is of course the change in Adam's nature at the fall - was there a change in his physical nature or not? It is well known that we say there was no change and it may not be so well known that perhaps 99% of Christians throughout the world accept and teach that there was a change in Adam's flesh which was passed on to all his posterity making them all of sinful flesh.

When writing in The Ambassador magazine for March 1869 Dr. Thomas said:

"Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he transgressed. There is no evidence of this whatever, and the presumption and evidence are entirely contrary. There was a change in Adam's relation to his maker, but not in the nature of his organisation."

This was a great breakaway from the common teaching surrounding him and had [his teaching been accepted by the Christadelphian community they would have all been Nazarenes' But Robert Roberts would have things his way and demanded that his followers accept that the change in Adam was not so much a change in his relationship to God but of his physical nature - the view shared with all the Christian communities around him deriving from the doctrine of Original Sin and with its roots in pagan beliefs.

Let us now look at each of these views separately and see where each one leads:

First we consider the view that the change was in Adam's physical nature. A defilement that implanted an evil principle in his flesh, giving him a bias toward sin and this change was passed on to all his posterity.

Overlooking the fact that God alone could have arranged for such a defilement, we see that Adam sinned while in flesh that was unchanged i.e. undefiled- So we ask, what was the point in making such a change or defilement which it is assumed made it more difficult, even impossible, for Adam's offspring to keep God's laws? Overlooking this difficulty for the moment, we find that the Christadelphian adherents to this view believe that the flesh is so bad that it must be destroyed because it is the source of all evil in us. And then the next step is to involve Jesus Christ, the holy, undefiled, spotless and perfect Son of God, who was without sin yet who had to be put to a violent death in order to destroy His flesh as an example to us all of what flesh deserved in the sight of God. If this were true and this is what Jesus submitted to at His Father's hands, then it certainly showed how much He loved us and we could then go along with Clause 12 of the BASF which tells us that God murdered His own Son for us. But such a view does not commend itself to our sense of justice, that the goodness, righteousness and mercy of God could demand such submission of anyone, let alone His only begotten Son who was His express image.

Having asked the question, why did God change Adam's nature? and finding no cogent reason for it, why make it more difficult for others to do God's will by giving them sin in the flesh? We meet with no convincing reason. We next ask:-

1. If Adam's natural death at the age 930 years was the punishment for his sin, why should anyone else suffer for it?

2. As Adam's flesh was destroyed by corruption after a natural death, why was it necessary for Jesus to die a violent death?

3. If Adam's punishment for disobedience was natural death, why was it not sufficient for Jesus to die a natural death to secure salvation for Adam and his posterity?

4. As Jesus' flesh did not see corruption, how was He a fitting representative for the rest of mankind?

5. If God decided that natural death was the suitable punishment for Adam, why did Jesus die a cruel and violent death to put away sin?

6. Furthermore, how can flesh, which God gave us, be considered the source of evil when God gives us only good things?

7. How can God demand the ritual destruction of the flesh of Jesus when it was the flesh God gave Him?

150 years of Christadelphian writings have given no appropriate answers to any of these questions and all surmising regarding changed flesh results in God being the perpetrator of the outrageous act of defiling it without cause.

It is because of these things and finding there is neither reason nor evidence in the Scriptures for a change in Adam's flesh that we are convinced that no change took place, and that our flesh today is as good as God made it for Adam in the Garden of Eden - "very good" for the purpose of putting man on probation for eternal life.

If any Christadelphian will provide us with some thoughtful reasons in answer to the above, please let us discuss them in these pages.

Now we come to the view of the Nazarene Fellowship that the change in Adam was one of relationship to His Creator, a belief held by Dr. Thomas on repeated occasions; and in presenting this position we put forward the understanding that Adam was placed on probation for eternal life by God. He was created the son of God and was given freewill or choice to please God or displease Him through either keeping or breaking the law God gave him.

Adam failed in his probation and his relationship to God changed, for he had now become a servant of sin - "his servants ye are to whom ye obey." (Romans 6:16). As the servant of sin he was to be put to death in the day he sinned, but by the grace of God his life was spared when an animal was slain in his stead as a covering over of his sin. When his sacrifice was made the promise was given that one should come, the seed of the woman, to take away sin.

It is the God-given principle that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and from this it follows that with the shedding of the blood of the animal sacrifices throughout scripture, sin was forgiven wherever the offerers hearts were right before God. The shedding of blood of the animal was to illustrate that the sinner deserved to die for his transgression by the shedding of his blood, but in God's mercy the blood of the animal was accepted in the place of the blood of the sinner. In Eden, we see then the hearts of Adam and Eve were right before God when, in their shame, they made coats of leaves for a covering, so when the animals were slain and the blood shed, Adam and Eve were forgiven, and their lives spared - the sentence of death was not carried out.

God has ever turned from retribution when man has turned again to Him.

Love to all, Russell.

The following article appeared in the "Australian Christadelphian Shield" magazine for February 2001. In a note attached to the article, the writer says - "I carried out the study to clear my own mind on the subject of Christ's sacrifice." The editor wrote - "From his recourse to the Bible alone for collating side-by-side the relevant scriptures we learn that total obedience to His Father's will was the efficacious factor in the saving work of Christ (Romans 5:19). The object of sacrifice is to atone for disobedience, not for man's physical and mental constitution - broadly labelled 'human nature' - but for that which our God-given faculties disobediently conceive and commit (James 1:15)..."

What Did Christ Gain From His Sacrifice?

This mortal must put on immortality. I Corinthians 15:51-53. Those brethren who are approved at the judgment when Christ comes, will have been born of woman been sinners, been baptised, lived out their lives in service to God and done some good works out of faith.

They will be clothed with righteousness which has come from Christ. They will be given eternal life and will also receive rewards such as "authority over five cities." They will pass from human nature to eternal life without dying.

So also is Christ? Christ was born of woman, was not a sinner, was baptised, lived out his life in service to God and did many good works out of faith. He was clothed with His own righteousness. He was given eternal life and has received rewards as "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18.

On what principle should Jesus have had to die in order to achieve eternal life? Surely His own eternal life was assured by His own righteousness- “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” Acts 2:24.

Scripture seems to be telling us that if a man could live without sinning (as Jesus did), or have all his sins covered (and be alive when Christ comes), he would gain eternal life without dying.

For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. If Jesus did not have to die to achieve eternal life for Himself, why did He die? Could it be that Jesus willingly offered Himself to save sinners, with no thought for Himself? Could His motives have been completely altruistic?

Relevant passages Below are passages which indicate the purpose of Christ’s sacrificial death. They are quoted in full to make it easy for the reader to see the overall picture. There are other similar relevant passages.

John 15:13 “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Romans 5:7,8. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 8:32 “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

I Corinthians 5:7 “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:”

1 Corinthians 15:3 “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Galatians 1:4 “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”

Galatians 3:13 “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree:”

Ephesians 5:2 “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”

1 Thessalonians 5:10 “Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”

Titus 2:14 “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Hebrews 1:3 “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Hebrews 6:20 “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrews 10:20 “By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

1 Peter 2:21 “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

1 Peter 2:24 “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we. Being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

1 Peter 4:1 “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin:”

1 John 2:2 “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 3:5 “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”

1 John 4:10 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Revelation 1:5 “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

All the above evidence shows that Jesus died for our sins (He had none of His own). Is there a body of Scripture which says that He had to die for His ‘human nature,’ that is, to achieve eternal life for Himself?

Hebrews 7:27 “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”

This is often cited to “prove” that Jesus had to offer for His nature. This passage compares and contrasts the high priests of Israel with the Lord Jesus, a priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Aaronic Priest

The High Priest was not offering for his nature, but for his sins.
He offered the blood of others.
The priest offered for the sins of Israel.
The priest offered daily.

Melchisedec Priest

Jesus “offered up himself,” not for His nature nor for His sins.
His own blood was offered.
Jesus offered for the “sins of the world.”
Jesus offered once.

Hebrews 7:27 does not teach that Jesus was compelled to offer for Himself in any way. It shows how different the offering of Jesus was from the offerings under the Law. It contrasts Aaron with Melchisedec. Jesus did not have to fulfil the type of the Aaronic priesthood.

Did the Lord Jesus have a choice?

John 10:18 “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

Matthew 26:39 “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Scripture is clear that Jesus chose to offer Himself in obedience to His Father. What did the Lord Jesus gain for Himself by His sacrifice?

Isaiah 53:10,11 “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall

prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

Psalm 2:8 “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

The Lord Jesus will get great satisfaction from the fact that His sacrifice will have wrought such deliverance in the earth, and He will receive for ever the kingdom which is his natural inheritance through David-

Firstfruits

1 Corinthians 15:20 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

Being the firstfruits has to do with His resurrection, rather than His salvation. This is saying that the dead saints can be resurrected too, having partaken of His sacrifice.

Strong crying

Hebrews 5:7 “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.”

Once Jesus had agreed to follow His Father’s will, His natural fears and doubts needed to be relieved, and the angels strengthened Him to achieve the objective agreed by both Father and Son.

Humanism?

The idea that Jesus had to sacrifice Himself for His own benefit in the physical sense seems very humanistic. Can we imagine a conversation like this:-

“I will agree to die, but what’s in it for me?”

“Well if you don’t do it, you will not gain eternal life for yourself”?

It seems more in keeping with the divine mind that God required a willing sacrifice, one who would not be offering Himself out of personal motives.

Scripture tells us that the sinless Lord Jesus was the only one who could do this because of His personal righteousness and would do it to please His Father and save His brethren.

If Jesus had to die to achieve eternal life for himself, then it would have cost Him no extra to die for all believers. If Jesus did not have to die to save Himself, then His agreement to die for all believers was a great act of love for the ungodly human race.

2 Corinthians 9:15. The Lord Jesus’ offering to die such a cruel death for us, with no thought for Himself, must evoke in us such profound gratitude that we say, with Paul, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

R. King, Southport. Australia.