

# Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 209

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## Editorial

Dear Sisters and Brothers and Friends, Loving Greetings.

Brother John Stevenson's piece on fellowship and the helpful responses that followed from Sister Audrey Bundy and Bro & Sis Phil and Rene Parry have made me think about these matters as well. I do not mind celebrating the memorial of Christ's death by myself but I can understand that John does.

When I was young I went to church and to a Christadelphian Sunday School with the encouragement of my parents who thought it a good idea for me to learn as much as possible about various denominations and I also visited Baptist and Methodist Churches.

All my life I heard conflicting views being expressed by my parents in opposition to their Christadelphian family and friends, so that almost without realising it I was able to absorb the facts painlessly and easily understand where the truth lay, and I was baptized at home when I was nineteen. But I continued to go to Church to mix with the young people that I had met in one Church in particular, and I am very glad I did for some of them became life long friends and have proved a great support to me in recent years, and so I regard these associations as a blessing from God now that I have no family. I am especially thankful to my parents for their wise and tolerant advice in this regard, in that their long-sightedness in allowing me such freedom has resulted in blessings later in life that I sorely needed.

On occasions I still accompany these valued friends to Church services. I can't say I enjoy these visits unreservedly as I find much that is done and said with which I totally disagree and I say so to anyone who will listen. My opposition and contrary views are tolerated and sometimes even asked for by one or two people.

Audrey expresses agreement with Steve Cooper's observation that Christadelphian doctrine gets too much attention in the Circular letters and in our literature, and instead we should try preaching the Gospel to a needy wider world. But how could this be done if we do not sometimes mix with the "wider world"? For example Church goes. It could be argued that John is trying to do just this. My attempts to impress or convert anyone to my views at Church have so far fallen on very stony ground but I have not been told to shut up, nor am I asked to leave or refrain from attending. I am certainly thought to be a bit odd with peculiar opinions as I expect John is too by the people he encounters, this is very disappointing but sometimes we are in a position to offer a "word in season" and we cannot know where that may lead the listener in the future.

I suppose the reason we give the Christadelphians so much attention, aside from the fact that many of us were past members, is that they claim a reputation for reading and studying the Bible and they acknowledge it to be the inspired Word of God. This should give us real common ground with them as most other Christian sects only pay these essentials lip-service. So we give Christadelphians credit for caring only for the truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures in the hope that they will be open to correction and a better way. Church people do not have this familiarity or complete trust in the Scriptures so it is always a problem to know how to approach them.

The Churches embrace many wrong and unbiblical doctrines because they prefer to believe in man-made traditions rather than the truths available in the Bible. They do not however teach the blasphemous doctrine of a defiled Saviour, a doctrine which is an anathema to those of us who believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens.” The Churches also believe as do the Christadelphians in “Original Sin” but at least in the 39 Articles the Church has the good grace to exempt Jesus from this well known fable. Unfortunately they replace it with another fable by making Jesus part of God in the tradition of the Trinity. This is a thoroughly mistaken and unscriptural explanation, but it is not as dishonouring and unforgivable as preaching a defiled Messiah. This particular doctrine is the one that makes it quite impossible to take bread and wine with Christadelphians.

Therefore I must say that if I felt the need to take part in a memorial of Christ’s death I would certainly choose to do it in Church and not amongst Christadelphians. These views may seem dubious to some of our readers. However in mitigation I would say this: when I was a child brother Fred Pearce often stayed at our house. He was the first person to produce a Circular Letter. He produced it in his shed in the garden between shifts down a mine in south Wales. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Bible which was hardly out of his hands. Fred was a person of whom it could truly be said that the Word of God was his meat and drink and he had no interest in talking or writing about anything but what he fervently believed to be the true Gospel. For many years there was a letter in the post almost every day to my father from Fred about the scriptures. On one occasion I heard Fred say that he would have no difficulty in breaking bread in a Church. How many times I have wished since that I had asked him to enlarge on that remark, but I was too young to appreciate then the import it would later have for me. But this comment has stayed with me and is giving me food for thought to this day.

“Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:9)

Love to all. Helen Brady.

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**Further to the correspondence reported in our last Circular Letter we have received the following letter from Eric Phipps:**

Dear Russell,

Your letter dated 31st July was duly received and read very carefully. My reply is as follows.

The Christadelphian views (as you call them) that I have expressed are not the mere assumptions you believe them to be. Such a conclusion reveals the superficial thinking which underlies the whole of your reply. In doctrinal matters I do not have “views” but rather convictions based upon scriptural teaching which excludes assumptions of mere human reasoning.

You infer that no one wants to read what I wrote to you regarding their understanding of the Bible. No doubt that is true of those who comprise the Nazarene Fellowship seeing that like yourself you regard the writings of Edward Turney and Ernest Brady as impeccable as is evidenced by your letter and your literature.

But your reasoning like theirs will not stand the test of Scripture teaching, which is the only test that matters, so let us put what you wrote to that examination.

In your second paragraph you agree that Adam and Eve were created corruptible but disagree that they were not in their “very good” state corrupting.

Now the Divine account in Genesis 2:7 states: “And 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.”

Now by your theory you must read into that simple unequivocal statement of fact the meaning that man became a living, corrupting dying soul. You cannot avoid that conclusion and I suggest that such an idea is not only assumption but quite foreign to the simple meaning.

You go on to say that their “very good” condition related to the purpose God had in mind without telling us what that purpose was other than “naturally ageing bodies for Adam and Eve suited that purpose perfectly”

In reading that statement it is strange to learn from the Scriptures that God is to fill the earth with His glory - to rid it of sin and death - to populate it with a race of men equal to the angels who cannot die. Strange that as you believe He should commence that purpose with dying corrupting beings in order to get rid of that process. But decay of body and termination of life formed no part of Adam’s original “very good” condition. He was created a living soul. To believe that he was corrupting from the day of his formation is crass assumption made more so by the inspired word of the Apostle Paul who wrote that “death entered into the world by sin.” Romans 5:12 and not by creation.

You go on to question my comments regarding the serpent even though my words could not be more plain. I certainly do believe the serpent had a mind of its own. I believe what the inspired record states. It possessed a mind which was subtle in its reasoning, was at variance with what God had stated and was amoral because it was not endowed, as were our first parents, with moral qualities. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:3 :-

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through its subtlety so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, for if he that cometh preaching another Jesus etc.”

Beware Russell that you fall not into the same category.

The whole purpose of a literal thinking speaking serpent (although unique among the beasts of creation) was to test the loyalty and obedience of Adam and Eve to their Creator and it is not for us to question the prerogative of God in the means used for that purpose. Moreover it is important to realise that there is no evidence whatsoever to believe that prior to their contact with the mind of the serpent they had any desire to disobey their Creator - it never entered their heads. Their minds were quite unsullied by any such thoughts.

But when Eve first listened to the enticing words of the Serpent insinuating that what God had stated was not really true - they would not surely die but rather that by eating of the forbidden fruit they would become as the Elohim - those superior beings with whom they discoursed in the garden and be elevated to their Divine eminence, so it was that such thoughts so imbibed, became an alien element in her mind. They constituted a power which she allowed to dominate her thinking to the exclusion of the Word of God - a fatal process and which was the cause of transgression.

The record in Genesis 3 verses 4 and 5 confirm the forgoing remarks. The mind of Eve and then of Adam (by the same process) became corrupted by the entrance of the serpent mind which formed no part of their original pristine state.

Nothing of this is assumption but rather what the Scriptures teach to any intelligent reader. But it would appear from your letter that you do not accept this. Am I to understand that you believe the record in Genesis referred to is but a vision - a word picture and not a reality - an actual occurrence - merely a way of explaining things? Would you please enlighten us.

In spite of the plain teaching of the Scriptures in this matter you go on to deny that the sacrifice of Jesus was first for Himself that it might provide the means of our salvation and then go on to infer that the faithful will be raised incorruptible - the old immortal emergence heresy.

Proceeding, you then quote two sentences from my letter which could not state the Truth with which it deals any plainer but ask why my thoughts could not be expressed in simple language. You ask, 'wouldn't it be so much easier to say that God's Law gave Adam and Eve a choice and they chose the wrong course?' Well indeed for Sunday School scholars no doubt such language would be appropriate. But I thought we had by now (after your 40 years) that we had been weaned from the milk of the Word and able to digest a little meat. Would it not be reasonable for any enquiring mind to ask - Why did they choose the wrong course?

If you would read again the second paragraph on page 18 of your Circular Letter (No.208) which forms part of my letter you will observe that I not only state the choice before our first parents and their disobedience to the Divine law but go on to give the reason why they disobeyed. They listened to the enticing words of the Serpent, considered them and then accepted their subtle reasoning to the exclusion of the Word of God. So their minds became at one with the Serpent mind in the same way as the thoughts of Edward Turney and Ernest Brady have, by your acceptance of them, become your mind. The mind of the one has become the mind of the other and is the force or power that colours all the thinking that ensues thereafter.

What was true of Adam and Eve in the beginning as individuals is now true in the collective sense in that the whole world lieth in wickedness because of the "Old serpent called the devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world" - Revelation 12:9.

You then continue by referring to my quotation from Hebrews 2:14 inferring that I do not make clear what the 'devil' was that Jesus destroyed in His death although the answer I gave is perfectly plain to any intelligent unbiased mind. Let me re-state the answer. You must know that the original word for 'devil' in the quotation from Hebrews is the Greek word "diabolos" (which corresponds to the word 'transgress' which itself, means to cross or pass beyond a fixed point or sin) but which includes that which causes to transgress or sin.

Now God gave to Adam a command namely "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shall not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" - Genesis 2:17. Here was the point fixed by God beyond which was transgression or sin. Adam disobeyed the simple command the cause of which was the diabolos which was the mind of the serpent accepted and acted upon.

That cause was passed on by inheritance to all his descendants including Jesus right down to our day. All except Jesus have succumbed to its power for there is not a man that liveth that sinneth not. He alone of men overcame its power whilst he was living and then took it in himself to the cross where it was destroyed in his death.

Now do not tell your followers that the Scriptures do not teach the foregoing. In reality its logic is unanswerable - it is quite simple and plain.

Of course one could say that Adam sinned when he was tempted and leave it at that. Why did not God give him the simple command not to eat of the forbidden tree, then stand back and see what happened? Why create a serpent unique in its subtle and alien thinking to be the instrument of temptation? Such questions you do not ask still less answer. But you do ask the quite puerile questions as to how Jesus had this 'crossing over' in him when in fact he did not cross over, transgress or sin. The simple answer is that whilst he possessed the diabolos as Scripture confirms, it never possessed him. He did daily battle with it and won every conflict, every temptation from whatever source and then as I have stated destroyed it in his death.

There is nothing baffling, as you describe it in all this. If you cannot comprehend it let your readers reason it out for themselves.

You continue in your reply to again indicate your ability to state contradictions where none in fact exist. In the Messianic Psalm 80 speaking of the deliverer and Saviour of Israel it is stated verse 17, "Let thy (God's) hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for Thyself."

The strength referred to was of course moral not physical. The whole purpose of Christ's paternity was to produce a man of our race who was a moral prodigy. But Jesus was no robot, no automaton. His spiritual strength had to be personally developed by his own efforts. We see its early development when but 12 years of age he was found in the Temple in Jerusalem amid the learned Doctors of the Law both listening and asking them questions.

That moral strength enabled him to render perfect obedience to his Father for it was his 'meat and drink' to do His will. But it was his own personal voluntary choice and not something that was automatic. There is no question in the matter of temptation of 'having it both ways' as you foolishly infer.

But in your response up to this point it is not only what you say which is so superficial and faulty but what is even more significant is what you leave out. Why do you not comment on the reference made to 1 John 3:5 on page 1 of your challenge stating that in Jesus was no sin? Read again what I wrote to you in this regard (to save repetition here) and answer why you mis-quote and completely misinterpret Scripture in order to bolster your false doctrine regarding your assertion that Jesus had a 'free' life.

The reference to Jesus having no sin relates to his state following his resurrection, ascension and coming again to earth. It is confirmed by other Scriptures in harmony with this fact. It completely nullifies your understanding of the Atonement. Moreover your reference to Daniel 9:26 that "Messiah shall be cut off but not for himself" does nothing to support your teaching that Jesus was a substitute for us in his crucifixion. Any rational reading of the verse will realise that it refers to Jesus as Messiah the Prince who when "cut off" at the exact time in the prophecy would not then receive the Kingdom of which he was the rightful heir. As the marginal reading has it - "and shall have nothing" for the city and temple were to be destroyed. Read whatever commentaries you like on this matter and you note that the original language gives the same idea. One must be careful to "rightly divide the Word of truth" - 2 Timothy 2:15.

For my part I shall the better have regard to your knowledge and integrity when I and your readers receive your response founded upon the Scriptures.

Your false distinction between a mortal and a corrupting physical state upon which your whole doctrinal edifice is based is pure assumption having no basis in Scripture. As I have stated the inspired Word of God teaches that 'death entered into the world by sin' not by God's creation. As to the Christadelphian "Shofar" magazine I can only say that I have never heard or seen it. If their conclusions are as wrong as yours then the sooner they join you the better so that together you may carefully reconsider your whole position and retract before it is too late.

I thank you for considering my reply to your Challenge and trust that your readers may have opportunity to further give thought to the vital matters reviewed, that indeed by a comparing of Scripture with Scripture we may agree together for it is not so much the hope of the coming Kingdom and reign of Jesus Christ, important though that is, but our entrance into it which matters which cannot be if our beliefs are contrary to the teaching of our Lord.

Sincerely Eric W.Phipps.

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Here is my reply to Eric Phipps: -

Dear Eric, Thank you for your letter dated 21st August 2004 in response to my letter to you which was published in our last Circular Letter.

I want first of all to recap your convictions as I see them set out in your letters.

I understand you to say that:-

God created a unique creature, not human yet able to talk with human voice. This creature certainly had a mind of its own, subtle in its reasoning, and who must have known and understood what God had said to Adam about eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This creature was not a moral agent (amoral is the word you used) and not endowed with moral qualities, yet able to converse with Eve upon moral matters. It was a literal, thinking, speaking serpent made especially to test the loyalty and obedience of Adam and Eve to their Creator.

This creature created to tempt Eve with enticing words to do evil and rebel against her Creator, was successful in beguiling her and corrupting her mind with its own mind. Its thoughts, so imbibed, became an alien element in her mind. These thoughts constituted a power which was the cause of transgression - the power of the mind of that old serpent, the Devil, i.e. this power of death.

Consequently the minds of Adam and Eve became corrupted by the entrance of the serpent mind. This corruption of mind, this alien element, became a dominating evil influence which was inherited by all generations, which naturally included Jesus Christ and is now true in the collective sense in that the whole world lieth in wickedness because of that 'old serpent called the devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world' (Revelation 12:9).

In all this I don't believe I have added anything to what you have said and of which you are convinced is the Truth of Scripture. You say that nothing of this is assumption but rather what the Scriptures teach any intelligent reader. I trust I haven't added anything to your meaning for my answers depend on following you correctly.

So now for my reply:

You say God created the literal, thinking, speaking serpent to test the loyalty and obedience of Adam and Eve.

Not true!

God gave the Law to test the loyalty and obedience of Adam and Eve. And with the Law He gave them free-will to obey or disobey with an unbiased mind.

But according to you, poor Adam and Eve had the serpent to contend with as well - a creature which, according to you, God especially created with a subtle mind to tempt, even demoralise and persuade, Adam and Eve to do wrong.

And then you say the serpent's imbibed mind corrupted 'their minds and became a dominating evil influence inherited by all their descendants!

Again, No! Not true!

God is love, full of mercy, goodness and loving kindness, so we read. "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man..." but you say this is what God created the serpent for - to tempt Eve, and then Adam, to do evil and rebel against their Creator. It's no use saying it was not God who tempted Adam and Eve to do evil but the serpent and then say God created the serpent for this purpose. That makes God responsible for their transgressions.

Moreover I am sure you are more than a little embarrassed about describing the serpent as some fantastic creature, quite unique, yet unwholesome. You seem to expect others to doubt your conviction and so you try to justify your understanding by saying:

“We must not question the prerogative of God in the means used for the purpose of testing Adam and Eve.”

Should we not?

Ought we not to question God in all that He does? Is He not open and honest with us? How dare you say we must not question Him or His ways of working, when, upon this very subject of sin and forgiveness he asks us “Come now; let us reason together.” (Isaiah 1:18). Far from questioning His prerogative to choose His ways of working, He wants us to see that His ways are right and proper and equal. Ezekiel 18:25 - “Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?”

Regarding the creation of man: God indeed made man a living soul but that doesn't mean he was not ageing from the day of his creation and neither does it mean that he was not made very good. The purpose of God to fill the earth with His glory is yet future and in Hebrews 11:39 we read “And these (the faithful and obedient) all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” God will rid the earth of sin and death at the appropriate time; He did not have to change His plans because of transgression in the first place, as your comments imply, so it is not “strange that God should commence that purpose with dying corruptible beings” nor is it strange that “decay of body and termination of life formed part of Adam's very good condition.”

But what is your purpose in saying that we are all, since the fall of Adam, dying creatures when in fact we are living creatures until we are dead? What is the difference between a living creature that is dying and a dying creature that is living? Is it not a case of using semantic paradox to sustain the outworn supposition of some change in Adam's nature as a result of his sin, when, in fact, the only change was in his relationship to God.

You quote Romans 5:12 where the apostle says that ‘death entered into the world by sin’ as if it proves your point that natural death is the wages of sin. But it doesn't prove your point. The death that entered the world by sin was judicial death, i.e. death for breaking the law. Today we call it execution - which is very different to natural death. I am enclosing a copy of our pamphlet “‘By Man Came Death’ - What Death?” as part of the answer to your letter.

Again you say it is the plain teaching of Scripture that Jesus died first for Himself that it might provide the means of our salvation.

But this is not the teaching of Scripture, plain or otherwise.

If Jesus had to die for Himself is it not strange that there is not one passage of Scripture which says He did? We are told innumerable times that Jesus died for our sins, how is it, then, if He were in any sense under sin Himself, that not a single text points it out? It is just as important for us to know whether Jesus died for Himself and us, or whether He died only for us, so why should we accept the one without testimony and why is there so much testimony to establish the other?

Here are a dozen passages which show plainly that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins:-

Isaiah 53, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed... The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all... for the transgression of my people was He stricken... He bare the sin of many... For He bare their iniquities.”

John 1:29, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

John 10:10-15, “The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life... I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep... I lay down my life for the sheep.”

John 11:49-52, “And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself, but being High Priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

Romans 4:25, “Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.”

Romans 5:6,8,9, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly... But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being Justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

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”

Romans 14:15, “But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walketh thou not charitably, destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.”

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

2 Corinthians 5:14,15, “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, and if one died for all then were all dead: and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again”

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.”

2 Corinthians 8:9, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.”

And we could go on to mention another dozen or more such as Galatians 1:4, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 4:4,5, Galatians 5:1, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 1:13,14,21,22, 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10, 1 Timothy 1:15, 1 Timothy 2:5,6, Titus 2:14, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 9:14,48, Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18. 1 Peter 4:1, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 3:5,16 and Revelation 5:9.

These all tell us that Jesus died the Just for the unjust. So please, Eric, list just one or two texts which tell us plainly, as you claim, that Jesus died for Himself as well as for us.

Let us consider again Hebrews 2:14, and I shall quote verses 14 and 15. - “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Now let us break it down :-

“For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same...”

Were the children condemned because they were flesh and blood? That is exactly what God made them, of flesh and blood. God did not condemn what He had made and God did not condemn His only begotten Son. In writing of the nature of angels and the nature of man, Paul says “The glory of the celestial

is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” Would you turn the glory of the terrestrial into a creation to be condemned?

“...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil...” –

The word “destroy” is not a good translation and “make powerless” is better. (Vine’s definition is “to reduce to inactivity -” see notes below).

“and deliver them (the children, not Jesus) who through fear of (judicial) death, were all their lifetime in bondage.”

The children were in bondage because their father, Adam, sinned. Jesus’ Father never sinned.

If Jesus had been in bondage He could not have freed anyone.

So how then were the children made free from bondage by the death of Jesus, that is, how did Jesus death “render powerless him that had the power of death”? The Bible answer is that Jesus satisfied the Law of sin and death by giving up His own life in the place of Adam’s life, so freeing Adam from the debt he owed to the Law. It was for this very purpose that Jesus was born Son of God and it was for this very purpose Jesus laid down His life, His own natural life (see John 10:11), for the sheep that whosoever should believe on Him might have life and have it more abundantly. God gave His Son and Jesus gave His life out of love for mankind. This is of course substitution. It was Jesus’ natural life in the place of Adam’s natural life. Jesus gave His life so that Adam should be spared, and the human race allowed to live thus giving the opportunity of life for evermore through Jesus Christ to all who will come to Him. (I share your abhorrence of substitution were it a case of God demanding the punishment of an innocent man so that the guilty can go free, but God is not perverse as to demand such a thing). “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). “O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Have you considered Moses who said, “The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me.”? - Deuteronomy 18:15.

Let us compare the two, Jesus and Moses:

Moses’ people were in bondage - to the Egyptians  
Jesus’ people were in bondage to sin.

The extraordinary circumstances following Moses birth ensured that he was free of that bondage.  
The extraordinary circumstances of Jesus birth ensured that He was free of the bondage in which his brethren were ensnared.

God chose a free man – Moses – for His purpose of delivering His chosen people, national Israel.  
God chose a free man – Jesus – for His purpose of delivering His chosen people, spiritual Israel.

Moses never forsook his own people to pursue his own interests to be a ruler in Egypt.  
Jesus never forsook His own people to pursue His own interests of inheritance as Son of God .

Moses wanted to help his people when he slew the Egyptian but they didn’t understand.  
Jesus wanted to help His people but they didn’t understand and they slew Him

God worked miracles through Moses to convince the people of his position as their leader.  
God worked miracles through Jesus to convince the people of His position as their saviour.

Moses was brought up in the royal household and trained in all their wisdom  
Jesus was brought up to be King and was taught of God in all wisdom.

Moses led His people out of bondage into freedom

Jesus led His people out of bondage into freedom

Moses gave them a law from God. Obedience would bring great reward and disobedience would bring dire consequences.

Jesus gave his people a law from God. Obedience would bring great reward of eternal life and disobedience would bring the second death.

Moses led his people through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

Jesus leads His people through the wilderness of this life to the Promised Land and eternal life.

Moses was placed by God in a strong position so that he could free his brethren from bondage.

Jesus was placed by God in a strong position so that He could free His brethren from bondage.

All these pairs show a contrast – the supremely stronger position of Jesus.

Are we going to ignore these things and call Jesus accursed? That Jesus was under both the Edenic curse and the Mosaic curse? Never! Jesus was under no curse whatsoever.

Referring next to Psalm 80:17: “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.”

Accepting that this applies to Jesus let us first ask in what way was Jesus made strong? You say “The strength referred to was of course moral not physical.” But it was neither. If God made Jesus the moral prodigy you claim, with extra strength to overcome every temptation, how can He be praised for succeeding and how can we be blamed for failing? I say again, if Jesus was made strong and we were left weak it could not be said that He was tempted in all points as we are. (Hebrews 4:15). The one contradicts the other. We must accept the writer to the Hebrews and reject the idea of Jesus’ superior moral strength.

To find the answer we need let us first ask in what way are we without strength (Romans 5:6)? Jesus said He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Why were they lost? Because they were all concluded under the sin of Adam and therefore in no position to save themselves. They were in a weak position; they were without strength. Jesus Christ, being the Son of God was in a strong position – the only one in the position of being able to seek and to save that which was lost. It was not a matter of God giving His Son, by inheritance, strong moral fortitude but of placing His Son in a strong position.

We do of course marvel at Jesus’ moral strength and greatly admire His determination to do His Father’s will and praise Him with thanksgiving for His love in all He did for us. His whole work of preaching the Kingdom to come and of His giving Himself as the Passover Lamb was a labour of love. But the whole purpose of His paternity was to produce a man who was not concluded under the sin of Adam.

You say, “That moral strength enabled him to render perfect obedience to his Father.” We too can render perfect obedience to our Heavenly Father as Jesus did if we seek help, as He did. This help has always been available to the faithful and in this age we find that Jesus “is able to succour (come to the aid of) them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18) and this He does willingly for the all who are prepared to do whatsoever He commands (John 15: 14).

And have you considered Deuteronomy 28 verse 1, “If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth and all these blessing shall come upon thee...”? You claim that only Jesus could keep the Law perfectly. Then read verse 15 – “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee...” If Jesus alone was given the superior strength to keep the Law that means all the Israelites were left too weak to keep it. How could God be justified in punishing them for their failure by bring upon them all the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28:6 to 68? They would have no hope of avoiding the curses. What does that say about Gods ways being equal?

Accepting that 1 John 3:5 may refer to Jesus after His resurrection you do not challenge the other references to His sinlessness before His crucifixion - 1 Peter 1:19, Hebrews 4:15, and 1 Peter 2:22. Jesus was without spot or blemish all His life here on earth or He could not have been an acceptable sacrifice. I know you agree that Jesus was without spot or blemish as to character but you claim that He “had the diabolos” and therefore He had to die to destroy it in Himself. But He had overcome the “diabolos” all His lifetime here on earth and there was nothing of it in Him to destroy.

In conclusion, I feel it is good that we should discuss these matters openly to help our readers, with the aid of prayer, decide for themselves where the truth of Scripture lies, and if any other readers would like to make their views known, do please write in.

In all sincerity, Russell.

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\* For those who want to take things a little further we give the following notes:

In Hebrews 2:14 the Greek word *katargeo* is translated as “destroy” but we feel that “make powerless” gives a better meaning in this case. It is so translated in the Emphatic Diaglott, while Vine’s Expository Dictionary gives the definition of *katargeo* as “to reduce to inactivity”

*Katargeo* is translated in the New Testament as underlined below by abolish, destroy, do away, become of no effect, fail, loose, bring to nought, put away, vanish away, make void (note that only three times is it translated “destroy”) :-

Romans 3:3, “shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?”

Romans 3:31 “Do we then make void the law through faith?”

Romans 4:14, For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of non effect.

Romans 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband..- but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.”

1 Corinthians 1:28, “The base things of the world... hath God chosen... to bring to nought things that are.”

1 Corinthians 2:6, “not the wisdom of this world, nor the princes of this world, that come to nought.”

1 Corinthians 6:13. “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them”

1 Corinthians 13:8,10,11, “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail... whether there shall be knowledge, it shall vanish away... that which is in part shall be done away... when I became a man I put away childish things.”

1 Corinthians 15:24, “Then cometh the end... when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”

2 Corinthians 3.7,11,13,14, “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones was glorious... which glory was to be done away... For that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded... the same vail untaken away... which vail is done away in Christ.

Galatians 3:17, “And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before God in Christ, the law... cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”

Galatians 5:4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you.”

Ephesians 2:15. “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.”

2 Thessalonians 2:8, “And then shall that wicked be revealed, who the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

2 Timothy 1:10 “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Hebrews 2:14, “that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death.”

The word “destroy” occurs 32 times in the New Testament and is translated from the following Greek words (the numbers are those used in Strong’s Concordance):-

apoffumi (622) used 19 times, as in Matthew 2:13 -  
diaphtheiro (1311) used once only, in Revelation 11:18  
kataiuo (2647) used 6 times, as in Matthew 5:17  
katargeo (2673) used 3 times, as in 1 Corinthians 6:13  
luo (3089) used twice as in John 2:19  
phtheiro (5351) used once only in 1 Corinthians 3:17

These notes are far from complete as we have not considered other tenses, such as destroyed, destroying and destruction.

Russell.

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I sent a copy of Eric Phipps letter to Brother Phil Parry for his comments. This is what he has to say:

I have found much in Christadelphian doctrine and literature to be full of presumption and assumption, this being the reason why I left that community by finding myself in harmony with much of the reasoning from Scripture of Edward Turney, Andrew Wilson, F.J.Pearce and Ernest Brady; proof that under the title “Nazarene” I cannot be labelled by Eric Phipps as follower of Russell Gregory whom I knew nothing of at that time yet at present a fellow-labourer with him on our agreed views.

To apply a wrong meaning to a statement made by Russell and call it assumption on his part is the misrepresentation we expect from the source he is allied to, a source that accused E.Turney of denying that Jesus Christ came in the same nature of flesh and blood of His brethren. Yet E. Turney believed on this subject what Dr.Thomas wrote – namely that Jesus came in the identical flesh and blood Adam had at Creation, capable of death and of dying, yet not subject to death by sin through breach of God’s Law, which did not apply to Adam until he was placed in the Garden of Eden

At this point strengthen your memory Eric, of the views of early Christadelphians in opposing believers in immortal-soulism saying of the Genesis record that man became a living soul through the breath of life, not an “everliving soul” which would discount the need for angelic nature which is incorruptible and cannot die.

I remind you now of Genesis 1 verse 5, “And the evening and morning were the first day.” In this way the Jews observe the Sabbath and we cannot dispute it and make it mean a thousand years either to Adam or to them and mark you, to transgress a Divine Law does not take a period of one thousand years. No, Adam sinned when he ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree in the day of an evening and morning. Why then for example do Christadelphians and Jehovah’s Witnesses make it a thousand years? Is it not because they cannot read the Bible effectively and have to manipulate it to fit their lack of understanding of the reason Adam did not “surely die” a judicial inflicted death.

Their misconception of the scriptural doctrine of substitution is found in the fact that Adam was not put to death or did not “surely die” which “inflicted death” means to those who rightly divide the Word of Truth. God’s words to Adam were cognisant of what Adam knew by experience to be a day. To say this was a thousand years is presumption and charging God with deceit and a rejection of the record in Genesis 1 verse 5.

Well Eric, you admit that you have expressed Christadelphian views but deny they are assumptions Russell believes them to be. Then you follow with a statement, “In doctrinal matters I do not have “views” but rather “convictions” based upon scriptural teaching which excludes assumptions of mere human reasoning.” I ask then, do you Eric, exclude Clause V of the B.A.S.F. as assumptions of mere human reasoning or can you find evidence in Holy Scripture which Dr Thomas and R.Roberts failed to find when such assumption was suggested to them as is now contained in Clause V?

It is also presumptuous to use Paul's epistle to Romans chapter 5 to bolster what Clause V contains in relation to the penalty for sin Adam incurred when his nature was already limited to his own created species in the same way it pertained to the various species of the animal creation.

Paul says, "That was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural and after that which is spiritual; the first man Adam was made a living soul." Paul does not use the term "a dying soul" neither does Russell, yet Adam, left to himself as God made him showed his life limit to be 930 years and he ceased to live as a result of not being changed to a superior nature like unto the Angels. It is assumed by many that this was the penalty for sin but such an assumption makes the words of Jesus in John 5:24,25 of non effect, for He does not speak of passing from physical death to life but in the way Paul describes his own changed position but still in a corruptible body, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the Law of Sin a Death." Romans 8:1,2.

The Law of Sin and Death is not a physical condition as Dr Thomas believed but a legal position of being under the constitution of Sin, or the dominion of Sin, from which one can be made free by belief and faith in how the death of Jesus achieved that freedom.

In his epistle, John did not say to his brethren 'We know that we have died and risen again from the grave,' but 'We have passed from death to life' because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." He cannot mean literal death if the man referred to is capable of loving his brother or not loving him, so it must mean he had not passed from under the death that came by Sin, not the literal death by God's creation and appointment in the beginning.

The apostle Paul declared that there would be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust but every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming - this being the just who are raised incorruptible when the living in Christ shall be changed and caught up with them to meet the Lord and ever be with Him. (No unjust here).

Are the writings of Paul to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians on this subject mere assumptions? Do we not have to accept that judgment has already taken place during the lifetime of these believers as also we believe to be so of the members of Christ the Nazarene, to whom we owe our allegiance? Would you say that in believing this, Russell is guilty of unscriptural assumption?

I could go on to describe many of the unscriptural assumptions handed down from early Christadelphian leader writers such as "Touch me not for I have not yet ascended to my Father's nature." The resurrection of the dead being a stage of process (Dr Thomas). More recently Michael Ashton in the Christadelphian magazine describing the features of Adam and Eve shortly after transgression showing signs of the haggard and wrinkled nature changing their faces. This, my dear Eric, is not what Russell believes or teaches. Russell believes as I do that Adam was created the perfect man of flesh and blood God intended him to be - a physical state new born babes gradually grow unto and then gradually decline

In Ephesians 4:7 Paul allegorically speaks of growth in the spiritual sense from babes to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, or as mentioned of the twelve foundations in reference to the names of the Apostles - according to the measure of a man, that is the Angel (Revelation 21:17).

Why cannot Eric see that Jesus was made of a woman a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death through the grace of God for Adam and all in his loins that they might acknowledge his death as a ransom for all, and by faith die in symbol the death Adam incurred but which Jesus suffered physically, the Just for the unjust to bring us to God?

If Eric Phipps denies this as substitution then he does not understand the Mosaic rituals of the Law (Ezekiel 18; Matthew 20:28), all having a bearing and relationship to the Genesis account. The fact is that when the moulded shape of Adam appeared he did not become a living soul until he breathed the breath of life. Take away from him the faculty of breathing and he becomes as a mere shape or mould, not a dying soul. This happened with the flood - all in whose nostrils was the breath of life (living souls) died for want of

breath. This is what Russell and I believe of the creation of Adam and of the difference between a living soul capable of death and the death which came by sin of which Paul teaches in Romans and Corinthians.

If Eric would care to read some of my booklets on this subject and the Resurrection they are available from Russell free of charge and he could then challenge me and prove from Scripture what the truth is for we must rightly divide the Word of Truth. I therefore compliment Eric for doing what current Christadelphian writers fail to do when challenged.

I therefore hope someone will be edified by these comments.

P.Parry

P.S. Eric includes Adam with Eve of being corrupted and deceived by the subtle mind of the serpent but the Apostle Paul says Adam was not deceived so this is a little more of his assumption. See 1 Timothy 2:14.

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## **“COME NOW, LET US REASON TOGETHER” SAITH THE LORD.**

For over forty years the Nazarene Fellowship has been circularising the Christadelphians in an effort to enlighten the members of that community about the apostate and blasphemous doctrine Christadelphianism contains.

We have undertaken this thankless task because of a genuine concern for the friends and relatives many of us were forced to leave behind when we discovered Christadelphians did not know or preach the truth about the Sacrifice of Christ and the nature of man as it has been revealed in the Bible.

Sadly our efforts during these years have with a few notable exceptions been met with indifference or outright hatred. We have been called trouble makers and renegades, our views when not suppressed have been mis-represented and we have been treated like outcasts.

We have explained our views in opposition to Christadelphianism many times and in many ways, always inviting comment and debate in an honest endeavour to bring believers to the knowledge of the true Gospel and God's purpose with the world.

During these years we have discovered that although Christadelphians are fully prepared to take on a member of any other denomination professing an interest in Bible truth, no Christadelphian has yet been found to answer or disprove the vital matters of doctrine written in opposition to Christadelphianism and available for all to read in a wide range of Nazarene publications.

My father Ernest Brady produced many of these writings and in preaching unassailable scriptural truths he took up the fight that Edward Turney began over a hundred years ago in opposition to Robert Roberts.

My father died in 1986 aged eighty having waited for forty years to see one Christadelphian emerge from a world wide community to point out where Nazarene beliefs deviate from scriptural teachings. He waited in vain. Those of us that remain alive are still waiting,

It appears to us that the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith means more to Christadelphians than anything contained in the Holy Scriptures. But no logical Bible student could call the clauses contained in the Statement of Faith “The Truth” when honestly compared with scripture since one completely contradicts the other.

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For the benefit of those readers who may be unfamiliar with the questions of doctrine at issue and for those Christadelphians who have not read their Statement of Faith to which membership of that community binds them, we have set out in tabular form the opposing views:-

### **CHRISTADELPHIAN**

### **NAZARENE FELLOWSHIP**

1. Disobedience defiled human flesh and caused man to become a dying creature, sinfully inclined.

1. Disobedience alienated man from God and brought him under legal sentence of death.

2. This was the penalty of sin which Adam incurred and finally suffered when he died aged 930.

2. this sentence was remitted and man allowed to live his natural life span.

3. All descended from Adam inherit this wholly evil nature, making them inevitable sinners and doomed to death in consequence.

3. the sentence passes upon all who come to knowledge, but is remitted individually upon repentance and faith

4. This is the Sin-in-the-flesh, which makes obedience impossible and the punishment of death just,

4. There is no such thing as sin-in-the-flesh, and therefore obedience is possible.

5. Jesus, being the Son of God was specially strengthened to enable him to overcome his evil nature.

5. Jesus received no special power. He was made and tempted in all points like we are.

6. His death was an exhibition of what was due to sinful flesh.

6. His death was the actual penalty incurred by sin.

7. It was necessary for himself, as a son of Adam and under the same condemnation.

7. It was for us alone. As Son of God He was free from Adamic condemnation.

8. Redemption is future, a prospect only to be realised after resurrection.

8. Redemption is a present reality. "Now are we the sons of God."

It will be readily seen from this comparison that there are wide and fundamental differences between us. We reject completely the theory that the flesh which God created very good was changed to what is called sinful flesh; we reject completely the theory that Jesus needed redemption and that God punishes with death every individual of the human race on account of Adam's sin; we believe that these ideas are traceable back to the apostate doctrine of Original Sin and that they are destructive of truth and inimical to true holiness.

All Christadelphians should ask themselves and their leaders the following:

1. If men are born with sin in their flesh, on what just principle can God punish them for being sinners?
2. If human flesh is inherently sinful, how did Jesus manage to live a perfect life?
3. If the object of the crucifixion was to destroy sinful flesh, what was the purpose of the virgin birth?
4. If Jesus death was necessary for his own salvation, how can it be termed a sacrifice for us?

Helen Brady (1987)

## How Readest Thou?

“One of the strangest and in its implications so destructive of truth suggests that God relented of His intended punishment – Adam and Eve were reprieved by the sacrifice of the animal; whose skins were used as a covering and it is explained that it was their descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered the violent death originally intended for them. This really is the stuff of substitution and is totally unscriptural.”

Having read the above Christadelphian comment an unnamed correspondent sent it to us with his own observation that – “One could say Amen to that.”

In consequence of this I ask, does the one who sent it commit himself totally and say “Amen” by signing his name and offering in writing the alternative to the criticism stated above as “strange and in its implications so destructive of truth?” When requested, no scriptural alternative was received only that the fig leaf coverings were not warm enough and animal skins replaced them for warmth; rather strange that God should be concerned for the comfort of two persons who had sinned and were under sentence of death before the coverings were provided by the shedding of blood. Make your own judgment.

When Jesus said of Himself, “I came to give my life a ransom for many (or “a ransom for all” – Paul to Timothy) was this totally unscriptural and destructive of truth when it is the very truth that makes free?

Let the opposing critics go and learn what that meaneth, specially the man who said Amen to scriptural ignorance and who in fact does not distinguish between the Old Testament Scriptures and the Book of Revelation of Jesus Christ which should not be added to or taken away from. Chapter 22 verse 12 speaks of the adding to and taking away of the words of the prophecy of this book, not the Scriptures of the words of the Old Testament inspired prophets. The plagues added are those mentioned in Revelation not the Old Testament, we should keep the context. When the man who said Amen accuses us of adding and taking away and quotes Revelation 22:19, let him remember there is a Book mentioned – the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Revelation 13:8 and revelation 12:11; “And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death.”

Is he prepared to take away what is written in these two verses of Revelation and accept the consequences written therein?

Will he deny that the lamb slain in Eden was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Will he deny St Paul’s teaching, “By one man’s disobedience many were constituted sinners and by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, many were constituted righteous?”

Does not the latter act cancel the former and is not this substitution?

When he quotes from Ezekiel 14, the three men, Noah, Daniel and Job who would be delivered from God’s judgments of the wicked by their righteousness it does not mean they do anything but trust in God for protection and a way of escape.

Noah was saved from the flood by his righteousness and faith, together with his family. Job was restored in health because of his faith and trust in God and his latter end was better than the beginning. Daniel was righteous but he could not deliver himself from the lions. God’s intervention did this. St Peter said of Lot “For that righteous man vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds, but God delivered him from the destruction of Sodom. (see Peter 2:1-9). How then are we to recognise these righteous servants of God? Is it not by the blood of the everlasting covenant from Eden to Calvary – the Blood of the Lamb of God?

Let my friend read Romans 8:28 to 39.

Phil Parry

## **We again reproduce an Editorial by our late Brother Ernest Brady whose well reasoned arguments are a pleasure to read:**

Loving greetings to all in the true faith of Jesus Christ and in the hope we share through His great sacrifice. I have been greatly encouraged since the last Circular Letter by letters of appreciation from all parts indicating the pleasure and help it gives, the care with which it is read and the extent to which it is missed when it is delayed.

Every writer, including some who disagree to some extent with our views expresses appreciation of the free discussion and controversy which I include and find these parts the most interesting and illuminating. The majority of religious magazines are very reluctant to allow anything controversial to appear; after the discussions which tore The Christadelphian apart following my pamphlets "Thinking It Over" and "Christadelphian Crisis" the editorial Committee announced that their future policy would be to allow no more doctrinal controversy in the interests of the peace of mind of the Community. They are quite able to keep discussion out of the magazine, but they cannot chain peoples' minds and the probable result is that much of what they print is never read and the controversy which is suppressed in print goes on just the same.

One particularly interesting letter came from Sister Helen McCarthy (Australia) informing me on various happenings there and commenting on the Correspondence with C.S.R. which I have reproduced in earlier circulars. She writes:-

"I have always understood that he was "anti-Sin-in-the-flesh" but he seems to be a bit "mixed-up." I think his stumbling block is the word "substitution." To those brought up as Christadelphians and taught in the Sunday Schools it is a dirty word and personally I think it is best not to use it. The very mention creates a bias and I find one can teach its truths without actually using it."

As regards the instant and automatic hostility which is aroused in Christadelphian breasts by the word "substitution" I am obliged to agree with her and she may indeed be right in her judgment that it would be best not to use it, but I am not sure. Personally, I feel that if it is a word which properly conveys what we mean then we ought to use it where it is appropriate and not be over-concerned with their reaction to it. My own experience indicates that when people are really interested in finding out the truth they are not going to be offended or put off by a word whatever its overtones. When I use the word I am always careful to explain that Jesus was a substitute in the sense that he suffered himself to be put to death in the stead of Adam; that this is in accordance with the sacrificial principle, and that we do not believe in substitutionary punishment. God was not punishing the innocent in order to free the guilty; He was giving, in and through His own Son, a life of His own for the life that was lost. This is the principle of redemption, buying back for an equivalent price and as long as they regard natural death as the penalty of sin and fail to appreciate that what was lost in Eden was the legal right to life, people can never understand the atonement. If they would only see, instead of the implantation of sin in the flesh, a sentence of death; instead of the imposition of corruptibility, the condemnation of life, they would realise why Jesus had to have life in a sense which we do not; that he retained his right to his life by perfect obedience and then chose voluntarily to give it as the price of redemption; and they would not stumble over the word substitution.

It is pathetic in the extreme to see the lengths to which Christadelphian writers are prepared to go in order to avoid admitting the obvious - that the death of Jesus - the giving up of his life - and that alone, brought us the hope of salvation.

They realise that their teaching that Jesus died as a representative destroys any sacrificial element in his death and they adopt a variety of ways of concealing the fact, which they know is contrary to the plain teaching of scripture. There is the traditional method of plainly stating what they believe to be the actual fact - that Jesus died for himself, as "a ritual Condemnation of sinful flesh in the sinless bearer thereof." This approach is exemplified in the writings of men like Fred Barling, who says that for a Christadelphian human flesh is wholly evil and therefore there was no injustice in God requiring his death, or like A.D.Norris who said that the devil hung there dead on the cross. This crude approach is getting increasingly unpopular now that our writings are better known and people are asking themselves such teachings can be harmonised with Divine Justice. All the same there are many who still think the Bible teaches that sin is a physical principle in human flesh - like my cousin who wrote to me, "We all know that the Bible tells us that sin is in the

blood.” When I told him that this particular Bible teaching had hitherto escaped my notice and asked him where I should look for it he replied, “It actually says the life is in the blood, but it means the same thing.” He is a reverent well-meaning chap and we can only put such stupid blundering down to a deficiency of reasoning power.

Then there is what I call the “cream puff” method. By the use of a lot of fancy language an appearance is given of depth and cleverness which is really only superficial and when analysed vanishes into almost nothing. Like cream puffs - very attractive to look at but with little food value and soon sickening. I gave an example of this writing in the letter from R.W.Storer in the last Circular Letter where he got so involved in his verbiage that he overlooked the need for a verb in any sentence which is to convey a useful meaning. Quite a lot of Christadelphian writing on The Atonement nowadays is of this kind but there is now a newer school which is adopting the modern technique of the “the big lie.” This is the tool of the propagandist which has proved that if a thing is said often enough and with sufficient emphasis and air of authority people will believe it even though they know that it is contrary to the facts. The trick is that the facts are not concealed or suppressed but admitted, but they are so skilfully distorted or glossed by the propagandist that readers are made to think exactly as he wishes.

Probably if I left the matter there most people would think this was a gross exaggeration and that no religious writer would resort to such methods. Very well then. Here is the first article in the current issue of The Christadelphian (August 1967) by Harry Tennant. This man is very far from being a stupid blunderer and he does not resort - much - to cream puff. I have never met him personally but I think I recall Bro. Fred Pearce telling me that he was in some way related to him and he (F.J.P.) had a rather good opinion of his ability. He thought he knew the weight of our teaching but preferred the seats of honour. All I know of him is that he was one of the signatories to the Watford Report on the excommunication of Ralph Lovelock who had expressed the view and refused to retract it, that Adam was not literally the first human being but the first man with whom God concerned Himself. Although the Report admits that scripture could be construed to support the view he has been disfellowshipped, whereas the same brethren have supported L.G.Sargent, the editor of The Christadelphian even though he has given expression to views which undermine their foundation far more deeply. No doubt their extreme action was expedient, since to admit that Adam may have had ancestors who lived and died before sin came into human experience would be to concede the fundamental issue between them and us - whether natural death or legal condemnation to death - is the penalty for sin. This they dare not do - therefore Ralph Lovelock, even though he has affirmed support for the B.A.S.F., had to be put out. All we can do is wonder at the way their consciences work.

The article is an address given at Watford at Easter this year. Its theme, in the rather odd expression of its author is that “The whole of Jesus is bound up in his atoning work.” As if Jesus could have made a sacrifice of only part of himself! Its real purpose is to show that The Atonement consisted not specifically in the death of Christ but in his example, his lifetime of obedience and “all the names and titles of Jesus.” He writes:-

“Lest we should place undue emphasis on one element, the scriptures are equally at pains to distribute our understanding over as wide an area as possible.”

When he says the scriptures are equally at pains does he mean equally to Harry Tennant: or what? Up to this point all he has done is to outline his own proposition and quote five passages of scriptures. Each of these, so far from distributing our understanding focuses it upon one fact - the dying of Christ. Hear they are:-

- 1) “The Lord’s death.” - 1 Corinthians 11:26
- 2) “The Cross of Christ.” - 1 Corinthians 1:17
- 3) “The Son of God who loved me (and gave himself for me).” - Galatians 2:20
- 4) “Boldness by the blood of Jesus.” - Hebrews 10:10
- 5) “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us.” - 1 John 1:7

These are the premises on which he bases his assertion that scripture is equally at pains to distribute our understanding over as wide an area as possible. He is quite evidently at pains to do something with one understanding - and that is to deflect our attention from the dying of Christ as the crucial issue, but the

Scripture is rather more at pains to do the exact opposite. However he has stated his objective - he is warning us against placing undue emphasis on one element of redemption by suffering - life by death, and he adds "No one part should deny the validity and underlying truth of another." This sounds fine and we now expect to be shown these other parts or areas over which our understanding is to be distributed. We do not get it. Another eleven passages of scripture. Here they are:-

- 6) "Ye are rich... by the blood of Christ" - Ephesians 2:16.
- 7) "Having made peace by the blood of his cross" - Colossians 1:20
- 8) "Reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross" - Ephesians 2:16.
- 9) "You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh" - Colossians 1:22
- 10) "The sufferings of Christ" - 1 Peter 1:11
- 11) "Christ also suffered for us, the just for the unjust" - 1 Peter 1:21
- 12) "With his stripes we are healed" - Isaiah 53:4
- 13) "To give his life a ransom for many" - Mark 10:45
- 14) "He laid down his life for us" - 1 John 3:16
- 15) "That by the grace of God he should taste death for every man" - Hebrews 2:9
- 16) "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us" - Romans 5:8

Now if any honest person can read these further eleven texts and find in them – or in even one of them - anything other than the one vital point of the dying of Christ I will eat this Circular Letter. It is expressed as the blood, the cross, the sufferings, the stripes, the life, but these are only different ways of speaking of his death. Every single text which he has quoted concentrates our view upon a single fact; that it was the death of Christ or the sacrifice of his life which brought salvation. Each and every one is a negation of his proposition, yet he has the impudence to conclude:-

"It is pointless therefore to look for a magical moment as though by some divine alchemy there was in the very drops of blood an infinite potency or in the actual instant of death the precise time of redemption."

The writer's object is clear - at all costs to play down the importance of Jesus' death and to get away from the idea of sacrifice, because he cannot explain it in harmony with Christadelphian doctrine. Magical moments, infinite potency and divine alchemy are typical examples of "cream puff" writing - they have no real meaning and certainly no application to the terrible death of our Saviour; but what he is doing is something very far worse than fancy writing or obscurity. It is cool, calculated wresting of scripture. He quotes texts which are clear and unambiguous and draws from them a conclusion which neither they nor his argument sustains. The tragedy of it is that many of his readers will be simple enough to think that what Harry Tennant says these scriptures imply is what they actually say, to their own bewilderment.

One other point in this article deserves notice. It contains two misquotations of scripture. One of them may be a printer's error but it changes a word from a pronoun to an adverb and gives the text in which it occurs a slant in support of the writer's view of The Atonement, whereas the actual scripture is a positive proof of our belief that it was a substitutionary sacrifice. The other is probably, a careless slip by the author but since both of them will hit a careful Bible reader in the eye one wonders, if they are not intentional how they got through the editing and proof reading of a magazine as meticulous about scripture as The Christadelphian.

To return to my starting point. It may well be that we give offence sometimes by the way we express our thoughts or the words we use, but I feel that anyone who is deflected from a consideration of a reasoned explanation of why and how the death of the innocent and spotless Son of God gave us back the hope of life which was lost by sin, by the only word which adequately conveys the principle involved in sacrifice he is not worth worrying about. It has not been an obstacle to us - why should it be an obstacle to them unless they are wilfully blind.

When Jesus saw that his hearers were displeased by some of his teaching, He did not tone it down to accommodate their tender feelings. On the contrary He stepped it up. "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up to where he was before?" Literally, He had never been up there before and He was thus deliberately making things more difficult for them. We do the same kind of thing to Christadelphians. When they declare that Jesus was obliged to die because He was a man we step it up for

them by telling them of His own declaration that had He chosen He could have entered heaven alone without dying! This of course shocks them beyond measure, for they know and we know that it was for our salvation that He came into the world and had His courage failed the plan of God would have failed and this it is impossible to think. But as our contention is a reasoned deduction from facts which they cannot gainsay they are put to silence. If they hate us for it, it is a thing which we regret, but cannot help and our comfort is that Jesus' experience was no better.

In conclusion I thank all who have written for their help and encouragement and also for their contributions. I have not been able to reply to everyone direct so please accept this acknowledgement and expression of thanks.

With our prayers and remembrance of you all. Your brother in Jesus Christ, E. Brady  
August 1967

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We continue our extracts from

## **THE DEVIL AND HELL OF THE BIBLE**

**Megiddo Mission Church**

### **CHAPTER TEN**

#### **HELL DEFINED**

The Bible speaks frequently of hell, but what does the term mean, as used by the sacred writers?

The word "hell" as used in the Bible has no meaning as has been attached to it by people who are ignorant of the glorious truths of divine revelation. The original word has no affinity with its modern use. "Sheol," the Hebrew word translated "hell;" and "hades" and "Gehenna", the Greek words for "hell" have not a single definition of eternal torment in either the Hebrew or the Greek, as the words are employed and understood at the time they were used.

What are the definitions of "hades"? In Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon we read: "A subterranean place full of thick darkness. A hollow and subterranean place... The nether world, the grave, death, making unseen, annihilating, destroying, dark, gloomy." "Hell" is a proper term for the place of the dead, a place concealed from view.

As the seventeenth century English translators understood the English language, the word "hell" was an appropriate translation for "sheol." It meant simply "to conceal, to hide, to cover," hence it was properly descriptive of any concealed, hidden or covered place. When they thought of hell they thought of the pit, the grave. The torment theory has been added to the original meaning of that word.

The prophet Job made the subject plain when he told us that he was going to wait in the grave (sheol) for his reward. "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me in secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, til my change come." (Job 14:13,14). And where did Job say he would wait? "If I wait, the grave (sheol) is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness... They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust." (Job 17:13,16). He said he would wait in the grave, "When our rest together is in the dust" - not in the flames of hellfire.

Job expected to wait in the grave until the day when Christ should come and resurrect him and bring him before the Judgment Seat with all the servants of God. He said plainly again that the grave (sheol) is the house in which he would wait - not only he but all who die: "for I know that thou wilt bring me to death and to the house appointed for the living." (Job 30:23). This house to which Job was going is the house appointed for all living - how then could it possibly refer to a fiery hell?

In Psalm 9:17 the word “sheol” is translated “hell”: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Sheol here means the grave, destruction. The wicked, all who forget God, will be turned into sheol, cast down to destruction. Having never by patient continuance in well doing sought for glory and honour and immortality; they will not be worthy of being ransomed from the grave.

The thought is translated plainly in Psalm 31:17: “Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee; let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave (sheol).” They will not be shrieking in agony but will be silent, knowing nothing-

In Psalm 55:15 “sheol” is again translated “hell”: “Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell (Sheol): for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.” God’s judgment is not a long lingering torture, but the wicked are to go down quick into hell, to destruction, to the grave.

(The translators understood that sheol meant the grave, and in this instance they wrote in the margin, “or the grave.”).

This same word “sheol” is translated “hell” in Ezekiel 32:27: “And they (Meshech, Tubal and her multitude) shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell (sheol) with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads.” These people would lie down in hell - if the popular theory of a place of torture were true, with their swords under their heads! But no, the reference here was to the Eastern mode of burial, in which a pit or cave was used, the bodies of the dead being deposited in niches in the wall. As a mark of military honour, soldiers were buried with their swords under their heads. Sheol merely referred to their burying place, the grave.

The equivalent of “sheol” in Hebrew is “hades” in Greek, and it also meant “the grave.” Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:55 makes this very plain. Speaking of the resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality and gain the victory over death and the grave, he explains; “O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades), where is thy victory?”

Here the translators rendered hades “grave” as it should be; if they had translated the word grave in every case, how much easier it would have been to arrive at the knowledge of the truth!

## **WHAT LEADS MAN TO REPENTANCE?**

Fear of eternal torment or hell fire?

No, positively no! Nowhere does the Bible teach that the fear of hellfire causes men and women to turn from evil. On the contrary the apostle Paul states clearly: “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Romans 2:4). Not fear of eternal torture but the love of His goodness leads men to repent and serve Him. God offers an everlasting and abundant life as an inducement for men and women to faithfully serve Him and turn from evil.

The prophet Hosea declares the plan of God: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave (sheol); I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave (sheol), I will be thy destruction.” (Hosea 13:14). The great enemy, death, the dark, gloomy grave, is to be destroyed! For “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Corinthians 4:17). It is this inspiring sun-lit picture of eternal felicity which impels men to repent.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **IF THERE BE NO LITERAL HELL**

If there be no literal hell, what about certain Bible texts which speak so plainly of hell? How are we to understand?

In this chapter we shall discuss some of these questions.

What did Jesus mean when He said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28).

Jesus’ meaning here was, Fear not them that can take away your temporal life, but fear him who can destroy eternally. The narrative in Luke’s gospel is a little more explicit: “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” (Luke 12:4,5). Jesus was saying that martyrdom holds no terrors; only God’s Judgments need be feared. Stephen’s stoning was an example of this.

In Jesus’ statement “Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell,” He was not supporting the theory of eternal torment in a literal lake of fire. The word here translated hell is the Greek word Gehenna, meaning “valley of Hinnom.” It was a ravine to the west and south of Jerusalem. It is occasionally referred to in the Old Testament as the site at which certain Israelites during the monarchy worshipped Molech by making their children “pass through the fire.” Josiah polluted the valley with the bones of men to put a stop to this pagan practice. (2 Kings 23:10-14). But it was revived under Jehoiachin; and Jeremiah prophesied that one day the valley would be known as the “valley of slaughter.” (Jeremiah 7:39-32).

A medieval Jewish commentator on the Psalms says that Gehenna was used as a garbage dump for Jerusalem and that a fire burned there constantly. In the days of Jesus, to order a man to be buried in Gehenna was the most ignominious sentence that the council of the Jews could inflict.

The word “Gehenna,” translated “hell” in both Mathew 10:28 and Luke 12:5 is a proper name and should not have been translated at all, any more than Jerusalem, Jericho or Bethlehem. A number of the newer versions leave it untranslated. The RSV uses “hell” in the text of Luke 12:5 and in a footnote gives, “Greek, Gehenna.”

Why does Isaiah 33:14 speak of “everlasting burnings” if there is no literal Hell? The text reads as follows: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” The context shows that the prophet is referring to the time of God’s judgments. Verses 12 and 13 read in the Moffatt Bible:-

“Nations shall burn to ashes, like thorn bushes cut and kindled; till lands afar hear all that I have done, and the near lands own my might.” Then follows verse 14: “In Sion sinful men are terrified, the impious are seized with shuddering, crying, Oh who can live with such a devouring fire? Who can live on, with such a lasting flame?” This flame burns to ashes - a symbol of annihilation, not torment.

The definition of fire as given by the Hebrew Lexicon is, “A symbol of destruction, whether of men or things, so that to be destroyed by war is said to be destroyed by fire: figuratively used of the judgments of God.”

“Everlasting burnings” has no connotation of eternal torment. Jude 7 advises that Sodom and Gomorrah are “set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” The fire was not eternal in the sense that the cities of the plain still burn, but eternal in that it was destruction from which there was no recovery. So the “everlasting burnings” of God’s coming judgments will utterly destroy evil workers. It will be an “everlasting destruction” from which they will have no second chance to repent. (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

If there is no literal hellfire, what is “the lake which burns with fire,” or “the lake of fire and brimstone”?

Fire destroys! The term “lake of fire” was used as a symbol of total destruction as the wording in Revelation 21:8 states: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with

fire and brimstone: which is the second death,” the judicial death, the “wages of sin.” (Romans 6:23). The “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” is merely a figure of “the second death,” final or complete destruction.

Whatever symbol the Lord uses to illustrate the principle teaching of His word must be interpreted in harmony with the fundamental truth of that word. Whether symbolic or non-symbolic, all must harmonize to express one divine truth. The whole of the book of Revelation being largely symbolic, the “lake of fire” is also a symbol of complete destruction. The reading of Revelation 20:14,15 is enlightening. Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. According to the popular conception, hell is the lake of fire; hence it was cast into itself. To say “death and hell” is another way of saying “death and the grave,” and “the lake of fire” symbolizes total destruction. In short, death itself is to be totally eliminated. The forecast is: “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.”

What is the meaning of the unquenchable fire in Matthew 3:12?

The text reads: “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Will Jesus use literal fire to punish the wicked?

Is it a literal fan that Jesus has in His hand to separate the wheat from the chaff? Almost any man would answer that it is not. Is Jesus separating literal wheat from literal chaff, and gathering into a literal granary? Of course not? The wheat represents the righteous; the chaff, the wicked. Either the language is all symbolic, or it is all literal. We should keep in mind the principle expounded by Paul; “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” (1 Corinthians 2:13).

In understanding Matthew 3:12 it would be no more sensible to conclude that Jesus was gathering literal wheat than to claim literal fire will consume the chaff. Fire is used in this text to symbolise the destruction of the wicked. As we have seen, fire is figuratively used of the judgments of God, so that to be destroyed by war is said to be destroyed by fire. The fan of Christ’s judgments will separate the wheat from the chaff, faithful from unfaithful. The faithful will be gathered into His Kingdom and the chaff, the unfaithful will be destroyed with fire unquenchable - destroyed for ever. (Psalm 101:8, 92:7).

Believers in eternal torment often refer to Revelation 14:11: “And the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” Also Revelation 20:10; “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

The word translated “for ever and ever” is the same in each verse - “aion.” The first definition is “one’s lifetime.” That is, the punishment of the wicked cannot endure beyond their lifetime. And this is in accord with Jesus’ words concerning the torment of the unfaithful: “And there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” (Luke 13:28). Here is a punishment which they shall experience as long as they live - but no longer, for the dead “know not anything.” (Ecclesiastes 9:2).

Another definition of “aion” is “A space of time clearly defined” - such a space of time could not go on indefinitely.

We might observe another point (Revelation 14:10): “They shall be tormented... in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” If the torment of the unfaithful is in a literal hell, how could it be in “the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb”? If the wicked now suffer in hell, how can they be in the presence of the Lamb, Christ, who is now in heaven at His Father’s right-hand?

No, the torment of the unfaithful will be the acute recognition of what they have lost: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” (Luke 13:28). This will be torment, and it will be “in the

presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.” For “whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38).

Revelation 14:11 says also that “They have no rest day or night.” But night itself is to terminate. Revelation 21, depicting the new heaven and earth, reveals that “There shall be no night there.” Hence, the torment day and night could not continue after night itself has terminated.

Another point disproving the theory of eternal torment is revealed in Revelation 21:4: “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” In that age there shall be no more pain - how then could there be eternal torment for the wicked? We read also that “every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth” shall praise “the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Revelation 5:13). Would living beings suffering torment forever in some subterranean hell praise the Lamb even for a moment?

How merciful. How just a God we serve! Truly a God of love and mercy who does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men (Lamentations 3:33). Those who will not serve Him He will simply put out of existence; they will not have to suffer eternally.