

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 211

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## Editorial

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends, Loving Greetings.

Most of us have added a new word to our vocabulary over the past few weeks – tsunami – after the catastrophic events on Boxing Day when an earthquake triggered a tidal wave. Since then some newspapers and periodicals have been greatly exercised by the question as to where God was at this particular time. One columnist said that most of us barely give a thought to God but when we hear of a huge wave snuffing out thousands of lives in a matter of moments, we are more inclined than usual to seek some deeper meaning to our existence and so ask the age old question: “What’s it all about?”

The Archbishop of Canterbury was asked to comment and although I missed his original article I have read extracts from it and also various critical remarks about it and one of his paragraphs went as follows: “Religious people have learned to look at other human faces with something of the amazement and silence that God himself draws out of them.” That doesn’t convey anything to me which is a pity as here was an opportunity for the Archbishop to say something useful to people. But one thing he said I thought was absolutely correct “those most deeply involved... are so often the ones who spend the least energy in raging over the lack of explanation.” We certainly see this stoical attitude in survivors of concentration camps and those involved in the horrors of the Great War.

It is a fact that disasters of all kinds have been befalling humankind since time began. The simplest explanation is that we are part of the natural creation and as such we are subject to its laws and subsequent natural events. As Ecclesiastes says “time and chance happeneth to all men.” There is no easy or trite explanation for these happenings or indeed the illnesses that strike people unbidden and unwanted. Certainly a great many people who did not believe in God in the first place have seized on the tsunami as further evidence that He does not exist. But as another of the columnists noted, he had not come across anyone yet who has said “I used to believe in God until the tsunami struck, but I don’t anymore.”

Human life does seem to depend on contrast - what is food without hunger, good without evil, life without death? Life in this world is not perfect, very far from it sometimes. Perhaps the fact that we wish it was is one of the reasons we search for a solution to this world’s imperfections, and eventually we find our way to the bible and God’s promises, promises of incomparable hope for those who diligently seek Him and learn about His ultimate plans for the world. God is after all a loving Father but like an earthly father who helps to bring his child into the world and by doing so the child is given the chance of everything good it will ever receive. But at the same time he also condemns the child to life with everything horrible that will

happen to it, and, eventually to death. Is a human father wrong to do this? Is he to be blamed? God brought His own son into the world and by any reckoning it was a short, difficult, demanding and agonising life that he had to endure. Jesus was undoubtedly more misunderstood than any human being ever has been and completely undeserving of the terrible fate that he allowed to overtake him in his natural existence and all for reasons of overwhelming love, love for his Father and love and pity for his fellow men and women. If that was the lot of God's beloved and only begotten, a man full of grace and truth, what can we say about whatever overtakes us or those around us?

God's dealings with Job always come to mind in the matter of undeserved or unlooked for suffering. When God finally speaks to Job it is to tell him how little he knows, how puny he is: "Where were you when I planned the earth? Tell me if you are so wise. Do you know who took its dimensions measuring its length with a cord? What were its pillars built on? Who laid down its cornerstone, while the morning stars burst out singing and the angels shouted for joy?"

Love to all. Helen Brady.

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## **HEBREW CAPTIVES**

### **Foreword**

In the past years invitations have been circulated through the press and leaflet distribution by mail, of seminars on how to read the Bible effectively or apply for a learning course on that subject.

These seminars are conducted by people whose statement of faith professes to harmonise with two men calling themselves by the name Christadelphian in the nineteenth century, Dr John Thomas and Robert Roberts. It is true that when in 1869 both these men were in agreement that the first man Adam was created from the clay a living soul or natural body of life subject to the limit of its species ordained or appointed by the Creator; they had read their Bible effectively.

But later it was seen in written works by both men that they were not in agreement on what the penalty of Adam's transgression should be, though it is shown to read quite plain and understandable in Genesis 2:16,17 and other parts of the Scriptures, Old Testament and New. To Adam the sentence for breach of law was plain enough – inflicted death in the day of eating. Dr. Thomas said the opposite of this and of that view stated by Robert Roberts in his book "The Visible Hand of God" despite the view he held in 1869 which was correct. Robert Roberts had written, "It required what men call a miracle to depress to the level of the beasts that perish the noble creature God had made (Visible hand of God, pages 19,20), "A sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being" (Clause V, B.A.S.F.).

Dr Thomas, Eureka Vol. 1 page 248, "Seeing that man had become a transgressor of Divine Law, there was no need of a miracle for the infliction of death; all that was necessary was to prevent him from eating of the tree of lives, and to leave his flesh and blood nature to the operation of the laws peculiar to it."

But this was not what God's statement in Genesis 2:17 meant, for Scripture proved Adam needed redemption from bondage and it required the shedding of blood to fulfil what Dr Thomas in error thought was Adam's penalty. Adam lived 930 years as a result of redemption.

After the death of Dr Thomas came the enlightening appearance of Edward Turney and also fellow Christadelphian members. In consequence of Turney's lecture "The Sacrifice of Christ" Robert Roberts, full of pride, arrogance and opposition, confounded his followers into a confusion of doctrine and derision of the Son of God on a par with the builders of the Tower of Babel. Sad to say. Many in their ignorance of Edward Turney's views are still confused. - P.P.

# Hebrew Captives

## Lessons To Learn From Their Return From Bondage

Recently we have been reading from the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah concerning the circumstances which would finally bring to pass the very building of the Temple. Ezekiel was caused to see in vision and measure, upon the foundation of the former one built by Solomon but still including the Mosaic Law with its ritualistic rules.

What a lesson to those people who profess to read the Bible effectively! On his coming to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon and in company with many others such as Nehemiah and Daniel, Ezra being a priest and a scribe with knowledge and understanding of the Law in company with Nehemiah, both having great respect for the God of Abraham and dedicated to the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of Jerusalem against all opposing evil men, demonstrated their faith and determination to complete the work.

It is very striking to read chapter 8, verses 1 to 6 of Nehemiah – “And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that is before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel.” And Ezra did so and read therein from the morning-light until midday, “before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose,” and there were six men on his right hand and seven men on his left, all standing. But mark this, “and Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people... and when he opened it all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.”

Then Jeshua and twelve others, together with the Levites, “caused the people to understand the law. And the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

I have asked myself, did I or any of my religious acquaintances experience such a thing in any denominational congregation subjected to documented uninspired creeds?

When I read the words of Jesus in John 6:44,45 – “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day... It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God, every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” Verse 47 – “verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

Then I begin to question, where does this persistent dogmatic view find a place in its teaching of a standing before a judgment seat of Christ to either be accepted of him or rejected?

In the words of Jesus my question is answered positively, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out... and this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should loose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day.” John 6:37-39.

Raise it up again? Surely this speaks of a previous death and resurrection of believers in Christ Jesus, and in fact Paul demonstrates this in most if not all of his epistles, example Ephesians 2:4-7, also Colossians 3:1-4, it is certainly profitable reading and a strength of the believers Faith. If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob live unto God now, why not present believers who have redemption and forgiveness of sins through the acknowledgement of the shed blood of Christ and taught of God? See Isaiah 54:13, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-13.

After our reading of the faithful men Ezra and Nehemiah who with others of like faith fulfilled the Temple vision of Ezekiel we passed on to the prophet Joel chapter 2 verses 28 and 29, a confirmation of Jeremiah 31:34 and resulting in what Paul spoke to the Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

We read in Nehemiah 8:13-18 that in the days of Joshua they made booths from various branches of trees and made a feast of rejoicing. This they discovered in the book of the law which Ezra read to them, so they decided to do so according to the month required.

The prophet Zechariah also speaks of a time yet future when those who are left of them that went up against Jerusalem to battle will have a choice of going up to Jerusalem from year to year to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19) or accept the consequences.

According to Joel 3:9-20 much has to happen before that time as we can imagine from the state of the promised land to Abraham at the present time. It reminds me of the prophet Amos who said in his message that God loves mercy and not mere formal sacrifices. Amos was born 12 miles south of Jerusalem, but his prophecies were directed to the Northern Kingdom (Israel). He taught that Israel's future greatness was not to be secured through power and wealth but by justice and judgment. Thus God says through Joel, "I will gather certain nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land."

The purpose is not as some believe that God is bent on destruction of these nations without the exercise of justice and judgment beforehand. But considering the place where He gathers them it implies that for some there is a blessing at the end of the decision. Joel 3:11-12, Psalm 96:9,10. We read the meaning of the valley of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:26 "And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day," that is the valley of blessing, in other words, the valley of Jehoshaphat.

This reminds me of hearing a suggestion of the meaning of Armageddon that it speaks not of a gathering of the kings of the earth and of the whole world through the influential powers of the dragon, beast and false prophet to that battle of the great day of God Almighty. This is plural, not singular. The singular person is the Revelator spoken of in Revelation 16:15,16 giving a message and a conditional blessing of those watching and keeping their garments clean and be ready for his coming as a thief that they be gathered into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. It is not the nations or kings of the earth that are gathered, but the saints in Christ to receive the blessings and rewards of faith. At least this is what has been suggested but not dogmatically.

I myself cannot imagine all the elected being assembled in an earthly area, it appears more in keeping with what Jesus taught about the one that is taken and the other left, His disciples asking "Where Lord?" And His reply "Wheresoever the carcass is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." The carcass being the Body of Christ.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2, St Paul says, "Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means" In effect Paul is saying that the day of Christ is not necessarily at hand, for he will come as a thief, so watch for the signs, a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed etc. Also 1 Thessalonians 2:19, "For what is our hope, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Again, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, "Caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (an appointed place for the servants of Christ) see John 12:26.

Psalm 50:5,6, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is judge himself"

I think it is right and logical to reason that this gathering of faithful believers unto Christ at his appearing and his kingdom involves the administering of degrees of reward apart from the fact they have eternal life. An example is the parable of the talents where Jesus will render to every man according as his works shall be and according to the ability to increase the value of the talents given to his charge. 'Be thou over this or that city'

Matthew 5 The sermon on the mount verses 1-12, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

Revelation 22:12, "And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his works shall be."

Those rewards have been settled before He comes. He knows who is to receive them, His High Priesthood on their behalf has determined it and unlike Aaron He did not enter the Holiest of All (Heaven itself) with blood of others nor His own; this was left outside the camp His natural life unforfeited to sin having been given for the people and for the Sin (singular) of the world, thus covering the Edenic Law and the Mosaic.

Of him speaks the writer to the Hebrews chapter 1 verses 2 and 3, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds (dispensations); 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 (not His for He had non to purge), sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High."

Hebrews 13:11 instructs us that the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. It was animal blood that could not take away sin.

Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people (not Himself) with his own blood, suffered without the gate. If as certain people teach, Jesus was no better than the animals offered, why was not His body burned or thrown into the refuse dump? How disgraceful to think or even teach such things of Him whom God sent into the world to save and not to condemn!

Everything we read about the mission of Jesus was for salvation not condemnation of the physical flesh, at least where the gospel is concerned. For some reason, and I know its origin, this has escaped the minds of those people who believe we all are partakers of sinful and condemned flesh even Jesus Himself, so if the penalty for such, is natural death then we pay our own debt by dying and returning to the dust, whereas Jesus did not pay that kind of debt as He did not return to dust but came from the tomb in a body of flesh proving there could have been no reason in that quarter for him to be put to death.

This prompts the question, what of His blood; was it carried from the foot of Calvary's Tree to any appointed place? No, his life in the blood was given as a ransom for all, that all could avail themselves of the opportunity to pass from under sentence of the death by sin to the sentence of the life by Jesus Christ without any physical change. See Romans 8:1,2.

Therefore if His flesh was not condemned what is left to be condemned but His blood, and is there anything but praise in the Scriptures concerning His blood? Surely when Adam sinned he owed his life to the law he had violated; that life was in his blood and he was a sinner. Jesus a sinless Son of God gave that equivalent life in the blood Adam lost by sin, as was typified in the lamb slain for his provisional covering until the true Lamb of God Jesus the Anointed appeared on the scene.

We cannot redeem ourselves nor our brethren; Jesus could, being free to give His life in the blood as the price.

Hence the Apostle says of Jesus "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Ephesians 1:7 and Hebrews 9:11,12.

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear" - or choose to abide in the legal death by the sin.

Phil Parry.

**We reproduce the following article from our Circular Letter for June 1967:**

**It has been suggested that it would make an excellent booklet to add to our list. We would be pleased to hear from others what they think.**

In this article, Brother H.C.Gates explains his objections to one aspect of our belief for our consideration which is followed by a reply by Brother Ernest Brady:

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

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

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

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

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

### **Reply from Brother Ernest Brady:-**

Dear Brother and Sister Gates, Loving greetings and thanks for your kind letter of the 10<sup>th</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the son to have life in himself'

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

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

"If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"

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

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

But there is very much more; one only needs to explore the question of why Jesus was the son of a virgin to realise that it was not primarily his sinlessness which qualified him to be the redeemer. We agree that if he had sinned he would have failed, but if his sinlessness was due to the fact that he alone had the strength to overcome because he was the son of God, then his sinlessness had no virtue. He was no example to us. He might as well have been an automaton. It would be open to anyone to say "If I had been the son of God instead of being the son of my human father, I could have been sinless like Jesus." But we know in our hearts that if we tried, hard enough we could overcome all our temptations. I agree that the scripture says. "All have sinned" but this may not mean exactly what it says - there are some very remarkable characters who seem to be the exceptions which prove the rule. However it be, we know that Jesus had our nature and was tempted like we are, so that his sinlessness was not due to his divine origin but to his determination to be obedient.

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

free, even though he had been personally sinless he could not have given his life as a sacrifice. This is the whole point of The Atonement. This understanding of Jesus legal freedom is the only foundation upon which an adequate explanation of his death is possible.

There are principles underlying the Laws of Sacrifice which prefigure the sacrifice of Christ and if we do not see them and apply them it is impossible to understand it. The offering had to be the property of the offerer. It had to be selected from amongst those animals which were ceremonially clean. It had to be perfect of its kind and free from injury or blemish. The sacrifice made to deliver the human race from the bondage of sin was made by God himself. The sacrifice He offered was His own Son, His own property. Have you noticed in Paul's last words to the church at Ephesus (Acts 20, 28) he says "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with blood of His own." This was not Jesus he was referring to as having purchased, but God. The blood was the blood of Jesus but it belonged to God and with it God had purchased the flock back to Himself. Could you have any clearer proof than this that initially it was his legal status as a free son of God which qualified Jesus as the redeemer? If Jesus had legally belonged to Adam, God would have been violating His own law and His own principles by offering that which belonged to someone else and which was ceremonially unclean. The sinlessness of Jesus is only one element to have made an offering in which freedom from sin was the only requirement observed would have been the same as if the High Priest had offered up a perfect and unblemished animal but had selected it from amongst those which were ceremonially unclean.

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

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

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

Sin brought condemnation to Adam, and if we were treated as individuals placed under a law requiring perfect obedience it would bring condemnation to us. But for the purpose of salvation we are not regarded as individuals, but as the family of Adam, who is our Federal head.

If we perish with the world it will not be because we are being punished for our personal sins but because we are without God and without hope. This is what is meant by the statement "the scripture hath concluded all under sin", and not as you suggest, that all men are sinners (which may be true) for God foresaw that all would sin (which is not true, for infants are incapable of sinning, yet they die) and condemned them in advance. All are concluded under the one sin, the sin of the world "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." That sin of the world is the sin for which Jesus made vicarious atonement and this represents all the sins of mankind. If we were not all scripturally included in the one life of Adam which he forfeited by his disobedience, we could not be the subjects of the one act of deliverance accomplished by Jesus when he gave his life to pay Adam's debt, a life for a life, a ransom for many, the just for the unjust. As you say, in the final analysis, sin "brings condemnation, but if we were each initially held responsible and accountable before God, if we were to have any hope of salvation under the redemptive principle - and there is no other - we would each have required an individual righteous saviour who would be willing to give his life for us. The hidden wisdom of God brought in The Federal principle, under which a multitude can be saved out of the race by a simple legal transfer - requiring not perfection of life and a faultless obedience as under the Law but belief and obedience.

The great fact which so many people either lose sight of or have never seen, is that salvation depends primarily not on the forgiveness of our sins but on our redemption, and these are two entirely separate and distinct things. Judged according to the law of God and by the example of Christ, the individuals of the race

are sinners, but they are not held responsible while in ignorance and darkness. Jesus said, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men prefer darkness," or again, "Except I had come and spoken unto them they had not had sin", showing that enlightenment brings responsibility. But when we become enlightened and responsible we find that what God requires initially is not strict obedience to a legal code (as the Jews thought and sought to their sorrow to observe) but faith in the promises made to the fathers. When we learn what these are and what faith involves, we find that we are under the law of (the) sin and (the) death and ready to perish because the whole world lieth in sin. If anyone then thinks he can obtain forgiveness and salvation by good works he is doomed to failure; the death which passed upon all men (not natural death but the wages of sin - death as a penalty) which was incurred in Eden but not inflicted, still hangs over the race and will either confine him to the grave to which nature (not sin) brings most of us in the natural order, or if he is so far responsible by what he knows of the purpose of God, will require him to be brought forth in the resurrection to condemnation and the suffering of the penalty he will have personally deserved by spurning the offer of salvation. One who really wants to obtain forgiveness has to follow the procedure laid down in the Gospel " recognise that he is in Adam and therefore dead in sin; that Christ literally suffered on the Cross the death which Adam incurred, in order to pay the debt of the human race; through the symbol of baptism he can terminate his life in Adam and rise to a new life in Christ. He passes from under the law of sin and death and comes under Christ as his new Federal head and the law of the spirit of life in Christ.

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

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

These are the reasons why I think recognition of the fact that it is our position under divine law that matters, not sinlessness. It's so important and especially that Jesus was born free, the heir of all things. That was how he was rich and became poor for our sakes, by suffering in our stead, all included in Adam, the penalty due to sinners. It was thus that he became the saviour of all men, for our natural existence we owe to the fact that the original sin was passed over in the forbearance of God until He should bring into the world the one who could finally take away its power, but he is especially the saviour of them that believe because through him they have the hope of life more abundant.

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

With sincere love in His Name, E.Brady

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#### **Letter from Brother Paul Pells to Brother Phil Parry, December 2004**

Dear Phil,

I realize from your booklet a difference of course but I am arguing what that difference is in fact, and how you relate what you say when the Greek says 'death' and when it says 'the death.'

In your letter as in your article you 'plainly stated' that "the death which came in by sin". But in the Greek it says "the death" which entered by "the sin." A fact, which, because you have missed, I don't see how you can know what 'the sin' is relative to sin or sins plural. What the sin was, or indeed is, I think is highly significant. I mean it is significant that not only you have missed it but also that there is an important difference between them, which may mean adjusting your understanding somewhat?

On page one you say that "legal death has been reigning by one man's sin," and legal death is "non-physical." Then you say "If it were physical then freedom from the reign of sin and death would be impossible without experiencing physical death."

Plainly this is illogical as we all experience physical death don't we? Is your understanding that believers escape the judicial death in this age if they are baptized etc. for they die also? This is the only way I can see logic in what you say Phil.

Similarly what advantage has a living believer over the unbeliever if judicial death hangs over both? Even believers die the death, sometimes a judicial death! Jesus is the obvious example, but we could go on to cite the many martyrs from old and new testaments, the generations who died for their (the?) faith.

So if in this life only believers are free from this 'legal position' it really has no bearing for them in this age as they die physically anyway, the only benefit being in the one to come. Christadelphians and Nazarenes still physically die don't they? Only via resurrection will the death actually and finally be overcome.

Apart from these observations, in the publication "For the Wages of Sin Is Death," this title translation gives the English reader the possibility of understanding and believing he is able not to sin and therefore of not obtaining the 'wage' - the death. Wages must be earned, mustn't they? But it reads "the provision (Gk *opsonion*) of THE sin is THE death." However, not in the AV or indeed most translations is this apparent.

As the death is a provision of the sin, this sin can be seen to be Adam's sin by studying where the definite article appears in Romans particularly 5,12-13. Therefore this word 'wage' is not suitable as 'something provided' unless the wage is part of the provision, but I don't think this is what the scripture intends here. It has the idea of providing say for a soldier's needs, or needs in time of famine, providing for a wife or family etc. The only other occurrences you can compare are Luke 3 v 14, 1 Corinthians 9 v 7, and 2 Corinthians 11 v 8. I'm sure you can see it makes for a better understanding!

Thus none of us can avoid the provision of Adam's sin - the death - because we are all in Adam now, but will be made 'alive in Christ' in the future. 1 Corinthians 15 v 22 actually says "the Adam and the Christ." In shadow I believe we are now in Christ but not in actuality, but you may disagree on that one, but this is not our topic for discussion now.

If we indeed are in Christ now and not Adam then by your understanding we must be changed immediately we 'die' or better put, we don't die, but are 'changed in the twinkling of an eye' as Paul says. The last trump being sounded as each believer dies. Otherwise the idea of judicial death you speak of although attractive in terms of an understanding seems to lack a complete understanding in this area.

Also I feel the term "surely die", contrary to your statement that it conveys judicial death, falls short of impressing upon an English readers mind the difference between a natural or judicial death. Ask anyone if they will surely (certainly?) die I think they will agree.

For Adam, who had no reason to believe he would die unless he "ate from the tree in the middle of the garden," what would he have understood by death anyway? Execution could make sense, but would he have eaten knowing that an immediate executionary death would follow as balanced against a process of dying "to die (goal) you shall be (dying)" - result of goal. If I can put it that way. The word 'execution' would have been available in 1611.

All men today are aware they will die, even "surely die", except the immortal soul believers maybe!

In Ezekiel 18v4, 33v13 1 Kings 2 v 37 etc that you mentioned, these are in a context of “if you do or do not do such and such”, then ‘moot ta moot’ - execution? (I enclose a Hebrew commentary to show verse 4 in Ezekiel can be understood as a contrast between ‘die and live’ which is not immediately literal.

In fact Ezekiel 8 v 4 doesn’t say ‘moot ta moot’ in the original but – ‘he tamot’ the soul that sinneth - ‘it dies’, so you have that incorrect.

After the Romans study maybe you will agree that the sin (which so easily besets us Hebrews 12 v 1; Rom 7 v 23, as it did Adam) is COVETOUSNESS (which is Idolatry). This entered us as individuals along with the death also because of Adam. Without that we would not be able to covet for covetousness is now in our fleshly members as Paul indicates.

The sin reigns in the death... ? Rom 5 v 21

In that he died he died to the sin... Rom 6 v 10

Let not the sin reign in your mortal bodies... Rom 6 v 12

Don’t present your members to the sin... Rom 6 v 13

I swerve somewhat from my original desire which was to ascertain that the death is the judicial and death natural and I believe you have answered that saying that it is!

Finally if you can better explain what the judicial sentence or judicial state actually means for someone innocent of actual sin (a child?) or a man sentenced to death for say adultery or murder, and how they stand under this sentence? Because only one guilty, and aware execution hangs over him can be grateful for a reprieve!

And what if it is not carried out and they die anyway of illness or old age? That may suffice. There may be more light in an explanation here for more understanding between thee and me here if you can.

Earnestly Yours, Paul Pells.

\* \* \*

### **Reply from Brother Phil Parry:**

Dear Paul,

The context of my booklets and Paul’s letter to the Romans, is concerning man’s relationship to God’s Law. The contrast is between the death by the sin of one man Adam and his natural capability of death by creation. In this regard I have stated that the Sin of the world was singular to that of Adam, not plural and I do not think I have missed what Genesis states or what the Apostle Paul states in Romans 5:12.

On page 1 of my booklet “For the Wages of sin is Death,” I say the legal sentence of death is none physical until it is carried out. I’m sorry you missed this point, Paul, where I said “they had to know the way by which they could be made free from the reign of sin and death as a deferred sentence hanging or reigning over them, and still remain alive to become servants to God... (Romans 6:22).”

We have shown that when St Paul was freed from the law of sin and death by dying with Jesus, he did not experience physical death or any physical change in his corruptible nature.

You ask what advantage has a living believer over the unbeliever if judicial death hangs over both? But how on earth can it hang over a believer who has died unto Sin through Jesus and is free from condemnation? Only at the end of the millennium will the judicial death be done away. We are not all in Adam now. Some are in Christ now. But even those in Christ still experience natural death, do they not?

Paul says, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” We are in Adam by enlightenment to the law and its requirement is that we die in Baptism into Christ, and the sleep of death ends at the resurrection for the faithful.

As for Adam having no reason to believe he would die (unless he ate from the tree), we are not aware of what Adam thought or witnessed about the death or death other than that loss of life would be the penalty for transgression of law.

In Ezekiel 18:4 both the sinner and the righteous die natural deaths. But this relates to LAW.

Your comment regarding covetousness entering us as individuals sounds a bit like the sinful flesh dogma. But does not Paul tell the Corinthians to covet in 1 Corinthians 12:31? “Covet earnestly the best gifts.”

I am puzzled by the quotes from Romans 5 and 6 unless I accept Sin as a Bondmaster.

Enlightenment governs the position whether in Adam. We are not in Adam by physical descent but by Divine imputation. People owe their existence to the sacrifice of Christ through which Adam lived out his natural life.

If they die in ignorance eternal life is not theirs.

Yours in sincerity, awaiting the return of Christ, Phil Parry.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> reply from Russell:-**

Dear Paul,

Phil Parry has not missed the fact that the sin of Adam brought in the death (judicial death). Some 50 years ago, our late Brother Fred Pearce noted the fact in his article “Legally Dead To Sin – Legally Alive To Christ” published in our booklet “Alive In Jesus Christ” - page 5.

It is well documented in our (as well as Christadelphian) literature that the sin of Adam is called the sin of the world by John the Baptist. Which sin does not apply to our personal sins. We agree that this distinction is important to an understanding of the Atonement for it was the sin of Adam for which Jesus died in taking his place. ‘As by one man the sin entered into the world and the death by the sin,’ even so Jesus, by His sacrifice took away the sin of the world and with it the power of the death.

Once we have accepted the Atonement by dying with Jesus in symbol we can be forgiven our personal sins. All who come to God are thereby forgiven their sins for Jesus’ sake that He might bring many sons to glory.

Consequently there is no need for us to adjust our understanding though perhaps we will emphasise this distinction a little more so that others do not miss the point.

The judicial death for the sin was accepted voluntarily by Jesus and this was not in place of our natural death which is the natural end of the natural corruptible body with which God made mankind. Baptism is the symbolic death of the believer as he is united with Jesus and at which time he takes on a new life (Greek - *zoe* = life) in Jesus. Those who refuse to accept the Atonement offered them by Jesus will suffer the second death (judicial) at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ.

The death of martyrs is not judicial death in the scriptural sense as you suggest. It is the miscarriage of justice by man.

The second death I believe is symbolised for us in the death of Korah, Dathan and Abiram about which we read in Numbers 16:29,30. “If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord has not sent me (Moses). But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth

open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertaineth unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.”

The majority of mankind never come to know of the saving grace through Jesus Christ and in remaining ignorant of the laws of God, they do not come under them. Consequently they die a natural death not the judicial death.

In this life the faithful are free from the Law of sin and death and are now under the Law of grace. This is their legal position, i.e. their position as regards the Laws of God. Their death is considered as but a sleep and not a punishment, although their manner of death may have been a trial of faith such as we read of in Hebrews chapter 11.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is the death – i.e. judicial death. There is no more natural death to be destroyed at the time spoken of for all will be living unto God for eternity.

You say that Greek *opsonion* does not mean ‘wages’ but whatever it is called - reward, provision, rations, or stipend – I see it as the reward for services rendered as it is given in regard to the position one holds, whether soldier, slave or voluntary worker.

We are not in Adam if we are in Christ for we cannot be in both at one and the same time and we are made alive (Greek – *zao*) in Christ at baptism. John 11:26 – “and whosoever liveth (*zao*) and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

I Corinthians 15:22 needs to be read in the context of verse 19 – “If in this life (*zoe*) only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (*zao*).”

Being in Christ now means we have a new life here and now, our *zoe* life; it does not require an immediate resurrection at death as we see from Hebrews 11:40 “God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Regarding your next paragraph about “surely die” seems somewhat superficial, “Ask anyone if they will surely die I think they will agree.” Of course they will, but we are not asking just anyone, we are asking Bible students to read effectively - in this case, Genesis 2:17 which carries the thought of being put to death for transgression of law – therefore judicial. Ezekiel 18:4 - “...the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ezekiel 33:13 – “...for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.” 1 Kings 2:37. “...thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head.”

For the sake of completion I list the summary of the five deaths given at the end of Brother Phil Parry’s article – **“How Many Deaths Are There?”**: -

To summarize, here are the five deaths which I have tried to explain as scripturally and simply as possible:-

1. Legal or Judicial death. This is the death which came by Adam’s sin: atoned for through Christ.
2. Dead in trespasses and sins - through ignorance. That is, sold under sin. “Because we thus judge, that one died for all, then were all dead (or died) (2 Corinthians 5:14).
3. Natural death - to which Adam and all creation were subject apart from Divine intervention. See 1 Corinthians 15.
4. Symbolic death - through baptism upon enlightenment of the fact of redemption (released for a ransom) from under the Law of sin and death. That is, sold under sin (Sin’s bondservants) and the hope of life in and through Christ.

5. The second death - operative on all responsible, as God judges, whose names are not in the book of life, but experienced at a specific time. See Revelation 20 and 21:8.

Yours sincerely in the hope of Life for evermore, Russell.

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## How Did Jesus Die?

Recently a friend drew my attention to an article which claimed that there are a few early Greek manuscripts in which some extra words are inserted at the end of Matthew 27:49:

*“And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood.”*

The article further claimed that this meant that Jesus was still alive when He was speared and that this was the cause of the loud cry described in verse 50, and His death.

### **This is not new.**

Research over the last couple of weeks, indicates that arguments about the authenticity of these words date back to the early centuries of Christianity. They are NOT found in the KJV because the extra words are not in the Greek *“Textus Receptus”* used to translate the KJV.

I was not able to find exact numbers, but research suggests that the number of ancient Greek manuscripts which do contain the extra words is very small, compared with the several thousand which don't. Greek manuscripts which do have these extra words, include the *“Codex Vaticanus,”* and *“Codex Sinaiticus,”* which are two of the oldest manuscripts discovered. They are said to be found in some Old Latin translations which predate Jerome's 5th century *“Latin Vulgate.”* I have read that they also appear in earlier versions of the *Vulgate*. However they are not in the Latin text of the *Vulgate* version which I have on my computer in the *“Online Bible.”* They are also said to be included in some ancient translations into the Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopian, and Gothic languages.

The extra words are noted by compilers of more recent Greek texts, but seem to have been largely rejected by translators of modern versions as of doubtful authenticity. They are found in only a very few English translations. The RSV, NASB, NRSV, and Emphatic Diaglott have them as footnotes. Moffatt, Weymouth, and Fenton, include them in the main text without comment. There may be a few other lesser known versions which also include them.

### **Are these older Greek texts more reliable?**

There are some who make the dubious claim that because *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* are the oldest manuscripts we have, they must be more accurate — and that therefore the extra words in Matthew 27:49, must be authentic.

Of course this sort of argument is wishful thinking at best! How can mere age guarantee better accuracy? As a matter of fact, we can't even claim that those two older versions are identical. They are not! While they do both contain these words, there are many significant variations between the two. Not only that, experts tell us that *Vaticanus* has been overwritten, corrected, and amended in many places, by a later hand.

Compilers of the latest Greek texts seem to place a great deal of dependence on these two manuscripts. However, as we noted above, only a very few modern translations include these extra words in their English text. Many respected scholars regard them as probably introduced from John 19:34 by an over zealous scribe, trying to harmonise the two gospels, but getting it wrong.

The pros and cons of authenticity, and reliability, would seem to be a topic far beyond the ability of the average layman. When the experts differ, how does the layman presume to decide which of them is right? Even for experts, at this great distance in time, there is simply no way to prove it beyond doubt, one way or the other.

The real question we must ask is this - Does it matter? If this is so important, why has God permitted it to be left out of the vast majority of Greek manuscripts, and English translations?

In fact we shall find that it does matter a great deal. If the reading is retained, it introduces a major contradiction with John 19:34, which says quite clearly that Jesus was already dead, before the soldier pierced His side.

### **Was Jesus killed by a spear thrust?**

To get around that problem of possible conflict with John 19:34, the article claimed that the Greek verb used by John, ("*enuzen*" - translated "pierced") is in what is called the "Greek Aorist tense," and that this means that the word has been translated incorrectly. They say that it should be translated "had pierced." (Which would allow them to say that John meant that Jesus was still alive when He was speared).

### **A Greek lesson for laymen – John 19:34**

Is their "revised" translation correct? Or have they "stretched" the grammar? Are we wrong to depend on the many English translations of John 19:34, which say that Jesus was already dead before He was speared? How does a layman answer that?

Alas, we can't do that without getting into a bit of simple Greek Grammar. Don't give up! It isn't impossible. If you have access to a simple "Beginners Greek Grammar" and can read the Greek alphabet, you can easily check it out for yourself. Here is what you will find:

Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon, will confirm that the verb "pierced" is in the Greek Aorist tense. But what does that mean? William Mounce's "Basics of Biblical Greek," and Eric Jay's "New Testament Greek Introductory Grammar," both say that the Greek Aorist Tense, should usually be translated as a simple English past tense, i.e. "pierced".

Can the Greek word ever be translated as "had pierced" instead of simply "pierced"?

The grammars do say that the Aorist can sometimes be translated this way. But note that the grammars quoted above also say that this is not the usual way. And in John 19:34 it does not seem to fit the context at all. It is certainly impossible to claim dogmatically that it must mean "had pierced." Taking into account the natural flow of the context, it is more than reasonable to accept that the translators are correct to use the simple past tense! To put it even more bluntly, "pierced" is OK! And "had pierced" is not!

And that goes a long way to solving our problem about the usefulness of the extra words. We don't need to be experts on the validity of text variations in ancient Greek texts. All we need to know is that if the words are used to contradict John's Gospel, they are being used incorrectly.

### **What did cause the death of Jesus?**

That isn't a difficult question! Jesus had been flogged and abused by the Romans in a procedure designed to weaken the victim, prior to crucifixion. It wasn't unusual for victims to die of the flogging before they could be crucified. I have read that blood loss from the flogging could be as much as 1½ litres - more than a quarter of the blood in an adult body. It wasn't only the flogging. Jesus had also been terribly beaten and abused by the soldiers who placed that crown of thorns on His head. Although not specifically mentioned in the Gospels, Isaiah prophesied that handfuls of His beard would be torn from His face. (Isaiah 50:6). This would have caused terrible injuries to His face. According to Isaiah, it was all so vicious that "His appearance was marred beyond human semblance." (Isaiah 52:14 RSV). There can be little doubt that the result of all this vicious torture would have been severe Haemorrhagic Shock, (which would explain why

He was too weak to carry the cross). It isn't surprising at all that six hours on the cross was more than enough to cause His death (especially as he wasn't fighting to stay alive). Most victims of crucifixion died of exhaustion and suffocation.

Hanging from the nails in their wrists caused constriction on their chest which made it impossible to breathe. To get a breath they had to stand up briefly, relieving the pressure on their chest, but putting agonising weight on the wounds in their feet. Then they would slump down again to temporarily shift the pain back from their feet to their wrists. This terrible cycle of torture was repeated over and over, until they simply grew so weak that they couldn't lift themselves any more to snatch another breath. If the executioners thought the victims had suffered enough, and were feeling "merciful" they broke the victim's legs to prevent them "standing" to breathe, thus precipitating a quick death.

In the case of Jesus, it seems clear that after six hours, He had exhausted His reserves beyond the point of no return, and died. We don't really need to know the precise medical diagnosis. However much we feel inclined to speculate, it simply isn't recorded in the Bible.

### **Blood and water came out.**

How is this possible? Where did the water come from? Of course we can only speculate about the answer, but there is information available which might help us to understand that what is written has a reasonable basis in known fact.

The first clue is in what John meant by saying that Jesus was speared in the side. (Greek = *pleura* from which quite a few English words are derived). According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon it appears 5 times in the New Testament and is translated "side" every time. However it also appears in the LXX in Genesis 2:21-22, where it is used to translate the Hebrew word for "rib." This lets us know that we are talking about the rib cage area of the side, and leads to a reasonable speculation about the nature of what John has described as water and blood.

I am not a medical expert. However I have read plausible articles which claim that the manner of the death described above would cause a large accumulation of *pericardial fluid*. Apparently in extreme cases it can be as much as half a litre. I flew this past a doctor friend, who confirmed that it was possible. He also added another possible source of the fluid. It seems that 'right heart failure' can also cause the production of a clear fluid known by the medical profession as *ascites fluid*.

When Jesus was speared in the rib area of his side, just after His death, some blood and one or other of these fluids would have come out. It is not surprising that John's best description of the clear fluid he saw is "water." (Remember he was a fisherman - not a Coronial Medical Examiner!)

### **The Garden of Eden**

The same friend who sparked this research, also pointed out the remarkable "type and antitype" parallel between the story of the creation of Eve and the death of Jesus on the Cross.

Genesis 2:21-22 tells how God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, before opening His chest to take one of his ribs to make Eve. That wound, received by Adam while "asleep," was the means by which God created Adam's bride.

For now, we will be brief about this aspect. However it isn't difficult to make a spiritual comparison between what happened to Adam, and the events of the crucifixion. The "deep sleep" of death, the wound in the rib cage area, and the shedding of some of Jesus' blood, all seem to have spiritual meanings which can be derived from prophecies about Jesus, and His own teaching in the Gospels.

### **The last loud cry – "It is finished"**

What did Jesus mean? What was "finished"?

Put yourself there with Jesus for a moment. This was no “ordinary” crucifixion. He was not a criminal. He was there for a very unique special purpose. He was there to rescue us from the judgement we would otherwise face for our sins. And now, at the point of death, He knew, with absolute certainty, that He had done it! The unspeakable suffering of that day was coming to its end. The ransom price for our pardon from our sins was paid in full! “He bore our sins in His body on the tree.” (1 Peter 2:24). “By His wounds we have been healed.” What a moment that must have been! Exultation? Triumph? Jubilation? Ecstasy? There are not enough big words to describe it!

Can you begin to feel just a little of the overwhelming victor’s triumph which must have resulted from that? It was in that almost indescribable awesome sense of exultation that, with His last dying breath. He let out that great triumphant shout of victory! “It is finished.” (John 19:30). Then as Luke reports, He still had just enough breath left to say “Father into thy hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke 23:46). And then Mark says, “He breathed His last” (Mark 15:37, 39 RSV).

By His selfless sacrifice of Himself, the way was opened for us to become Children of God and heirs of the Gospel promises. And if we are now already children, there is the thrilling promise of something even more wonderful. “When He appears we shall be like Him.” (1 John 3:1-3).

Brother Allon Maxwell.

**Editors note:** I thought it may be of interest to say that the last words of Jesus “It is finished” could just as well have been translated “It is paid.” The Greek word translated ‘finished’ is *teleo*. It is used also in Matthew 17:24 – “They that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay (*teleo*) tribute?”

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**A few days before Christmas Brother and Sister Phil Parry received a printed leaflet from Brother Horace Taylor made up almost entirely of quotations from Scripture regarding ‘Charity;’ all of which is I am sure, well known to us.**

Dear Sir or Madam, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” - Matthew 6:33. Daniel 2:44 – “In the days of (Kings and Queens rulers of nations), the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever.” The righteous in the sight of the Lord God shall inherit it, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

It will be necessary to acquire, to build up within oneself, CHARITY.

1 Corinthians 13:1 - “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity. I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing...”

And so to verse 4. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 CHARITY never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part;

but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is CHARITY.

2 Peter 1:5 “And beside all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith (if you have any?), Virtue, and to virtue knowledge, 6 and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 and to godliness; brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness CHARITY.

8 For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off...”

Ephesians 6:13 - “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

For the grave cannot praise GOD, death cannot celebrate him, they that go down into the pit, cannot hope to acquire GOD’S truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children should make known the truth. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Romans 8:9.TRUE Search the Holy Scriptures, get wisdom, get understanding, that is the principle thing.

DO NOT BURN THIS. PLEASE PASS ON URGENT For God will bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. TRUE

Nevertheless when the SON of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth? URGENT:

Time is running out. Horace Taylor.

\* \* \*

**In response to the above Brother Phil Parry wrote as follows:**

All praise and thanks be unto God and Creator who in His love and mercy begat a Son who was willing to give His own life unforfeited to his Father’s Law of obedience in place of His brother Adam, who brought condemnation upon himself and which God imputed to all in his loins. See Romans 5.

Dear Horace and Rosemary, Greetings in the cause of truth and the Name of Jesus Christ. I will certainly pass on your printed message of Jesus and also His great apostle St Paul, but it is passing strange that your signatures endorse some of their teaching which you have in the past rejected and in effect made void the urgency of this printed matter you desire to be passed on.

For example, 1 Corinthians 15:21 “For since by the man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Unless you have altered your view you believe that the penalty for Adam’s sin was a gradual process of decay and death – to return to the dust.

If, as taught in Genesis, 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,” does that teach that man became an ever living soul and would not have died if left in that state without any further modification to the nature of angels?

People with the same nature Adam had at his creation – living souls in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died in the flood because they were not ever living souls but capable of dying. They died prematurely by law of the Creator, not by themselves, but by sin, transgression of law.

In like manner, since by Adam's sin came the death by sin, it was a legal sentence pronounced upon a man already by nature subject to dying through the physical law of his nature by creation for which he was not responsible. Natural death then, did not come by man; it came by the Creator. Natural death is not the death reigning by one man's offence, if this were so, how can life reign by one man, Jesus Christ? See Romans 5:16-18. One is either legally in Adam or in Christ.

St Paul is stating that it is the death that came by sin which passed upon Adam and also passed upon all men before they were born; not a physical change but a legal sentence from which without dying a natural death, they could be made free. See Romans 7:4-6 and Romans 8:1,2

Paul is trying to show that it is a legal sentence which passed upon Adam and all in his loins, yet birth through Adam's redemption in the type foreshadowing Christ's sacrificial death, they also by belief and faith could be made free from under the Law of Sin and Death hanging over them, not in their flesh.

With Christ dying instead of Adam the death Adam had incurred by sin (which was not natural death but by the shedding of blood), then by dying symbolically into Christ's death by baptism, believers are said by St Paul to have died the death that passed upon all men, not by personal sin but by Divine imputation, so that as by the disobedience of one many were constituted sinners – so by the obedience of one, Jesus Christ, many will be constituted righteous. It is optional on the part of all men.

This constitutes the true explanation of the death Jesus suffered in the place of Adam and for all men whether they accept it or not; it is not the substitution taught by Christendom, yet their erroneous concept of it is far superior to what Christadelphians believe about the meaning of why Jesus died on Calvary.

St Paul, writing to the roman believers, chapter 6, who had been baptised into Jesus death – Jesus, with Adamic sin laid upon him took it to the tree and rose again to life unto God. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all live unto God. Please note, Horace and Rosemary, if you regard as the penalty for sin your natural death to come, how can you reckon yourselves to be dead unto Sin and alive unto God? If then your printed circular is urgent, please regard my message as more so, in the Spirit of Love and sincerity in which it is sent. Not to teach; that is God's prerogative, but to warn. One cannot be in Adam and in Christ at the same time.

How readest thou?

Phil and Rene Parry, with charity.

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**In our Circular Letter No 206 for March/April 2004 we published an article by Anthony Buzzard, founder of The Restoration Fellowship, entitled “The Trinity Examined.” This was well received as being a well reasoned article which took all Scripture teaching into consideration. The following pages are about one third of Anthony Buzzards article on “Satan, The Personal Devil” in which he again considers all the relevant Scriptures but with conclusions with which we disagree. We publish it here for your thoughts and comments:-**

## **Satan, The Personal Devil.**

A contemporary of John Thomas, the founder of Christadelphianism, produced a controversial work in 1842 entitled “The Devil: A Biblical Exposition of the Truth Concerning That Old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, and a Refutation of the Beliefs Obtaining in the World Regarding Sin and its Source.”

A critic of this book described it as “a laboured attempt to dispose of the existence of the Devil, adding one more proof of the awful fact.”

Clearly there is a matter of the greatest importance at stake here. It is tragic that there should still be doubt and division amongst students of the Bible about what the Scriptures mean by the Satan, the Adversary, the Devil, the Serpent, the Tempter.

Alan Eyre's informative book, *The Protesters*, traces the fascinating history of those who through the centuries have shared the "unorthodox" beliefs of the Christadelphians and groups such as the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. These tenets include the firm belief in the future millennial reign of Christ on earth, in the mortal soul, in One God, the rejection of the Trinity, and the refusal to take part in war. It is however very remarkable that Eyre was able to find only two references to the extraordinary belief that Satan in the Bible refers to the evil in human nature, and not to a personal being.

It is a fact that the believer in the non-personality of Satan must hold that belief against practically all of his brethren who share with him a rejection of traditional dogmas. The works of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, spokesmen for the Church in the second century, show no Trinitarianism in the latter, Chalcedonian sense (though they do not retain belief in the fully human Messiah of the New Testament); they contain no belief in the survival of the soul in heaven after death, nor in eternal hell-fire; they are also strongly millenarian. The notion that Satan is not a personal being, however, is utterly foreign to their writings. This will mean that Irenaeus, the "grand pupil," of John the Apostle, through Polycarp, had gone badly astray on this major point: the proper understanding of Satan. Is such a proposition credible?

It will be our purpose to show that it is not only most unlikely on any reasonable view of the history of doctrine; but, more important, the non-personality idea is based on an unjustifiable treatment of Scripture. It's a dangerous mistake, divisive in its effects, and liable to cast doubt on the credibility of its exponents as responsible teachers of the Bible. It is an error, however, which can be corrected, provided there is a willingness to lay aside tradition and examine the matter carefully, if necessary over an extended period of time.

There is no doubt that the popular medieval devil, with pitchfork and stoking the fires of hell, is a caricature of the scriptural devil. We must, however, guard against the natural tendency to jump from one extreme to another and attempt to do away with the personal devil of the Bible. If that personal devil exists, nothing will please him more than to have his existence denied by those exponents of Scripture who have seen through the mistaken teachings of "orthodoxy."

To say that the Trinity, in the popular sense, is not in the Bible is in fact only to say what numerous scholars admit. To proclaim the future millennial reign of Christ is to echo the opinions of the first 250 years of Christianity and of many noted theologians of all ages. To deny the immortality of the soul is to align oneself with scores of scriptural experts from all denominations. To deny that the Satan (i.e. Satan as a proper name) is an external being in Scripture, is, however, virtually unknown in the history of exegesis. Such a situation demands an explanation which will fit the facts of history as well as the facts of the Bible.

The writer has examined in detail scores of tracts written by Christadelphians and discussed the question at great length with their leading exponents. One very important fact emerges from these studies: the exponents of "non-personality" constantly blur the difference between a satan and the Satan. On this unfortunate blunder, the whole misunderstanding about the meaning of the word "Satan" is built. No one will deny that there are occurrences in the Old Testament of the term "satan" where a human adversary is intended (just as in the New Testament "diabolos" (devil) can occasionally refer to human accusers, I Tim. 3:11). The question we are facing is what is meant by the Satan or the Devil in Job and Zechariah and some sixty times in the New Testament (not to mention numerous other references to the Satan under a different title).

When Matthew introduces the terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven, he assumes that his readers are familiar with these phrases. When he introduces the Devil (Matt. 4:11), having already called him the Tempter (v 2), he uses a title well recognized by his readers. He nowhere speaks of a tempter or an accuser. If we realize the importance of the definite article here our subject can be clarified without further difficulty. The celebrated New Testament Greek authority, Dr. A. T. Robertson, states: "The definite article is never meaningless in the Greek... the article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an

index finger... Wherever the article occurs, the object is certainly definite” (Grammar of Greek New Testament, p.756). Thus a saviour may be one of many saviours.

The Saviour means the one and only Saviour. An “ecclesia” is an assembly of people gathered for many different reasons (Acts 19,32, 39, 41). But no one would consider confusing this with the Church. Similarly, the Satan, the Devil, the Tempter is that well-known Satan not requiring definition, because the writer knows that his readers understand who is meant. Will anyone deny that a book carries a very different meaning from the book?

It will be instructive to see how Christadelphian literature confuses the issue from the start: “The word Satan... simply means an adversary, as will be evident to the least instructed from the following instances of its use: ‘The Lord stirred up an adversary (a ‘satan’) unto Solomon, Hadad, the Edomite’ (I Kings 11:14). ‘Lest in battle he (David) be an adversary to us’ (I Sam. 29:4)... There are New Testament instances, such as where Jesus addresses Peter as ‘Satan,’ when he opposes Christ’s submission to death (Matt. 16:23); where Pergamos, the headquarters of the enemies of truth is described as Satan’s seat (Rev. 2:13). Now if Satan means adversary we will read the scriptures intelligently if we read adversary wherever we read Satan” (The Evil One, by Robert Roberts, p, 12),

Unfortunately, however, Mr. Roberts has misled us by introducing the quotation from Revelation 2:13 without any indication of the fact that the text says that the Satan (not “a satan”) has his seat there.” The Satan is very different from the indefinite adversaries (satans) cited from the OT.

The fundamental error is now established and the argument proceeds on the false premise: “The trial of Jesus is usually cited in opposition to our conclusions. The great feature of the narrative relied upon is the application of the word ‘devil’ to the tempter: but this proves nothing. If Judas could be a devil, and yet be a man, why may the tempter of Jesus not have been a man? His being called ‘devil’ proves nothing.” (Ibid., p.19)

What we are not allowed to see is that the tempter of Jesus is not called a devil; he is called the devil, (Matt, 4:5, 8, etc.), that is, the one and only Devil we all know. The Christadelphian argument continues with the basic error entrenched: ‘Devil’ proves that it was one who busied himself to subvert Jesus from the path of obedience. Who it was it is impossible to say because we are not informed” (Ibid., p, 19).

The average reader of the book of Job and of the temptation accounts in Matthew and Luke will find it very difficult to believe that the Satan who acted as the Tempter was an unknown human being, as Christadelphians propose. John Thomas and his followers, despite their invaluable work of biblical exposition on other subjects, have regrettably distorted the Scripture by doing away with the definite article. This we dare not do. The Satan, the adversary, is the external personality who tempted Jesus and Job. A tragic mistake was made by Roberts when he wrote “Why may not the tempter of Jesus have been a man”? His being called ‘devil’ proves nothing.” He was not, however, called ‘devil,’ but the devil. Roberts has effaced the word “the” from the text, and by implication from the sixty or more occurrences of the Satan and the Devil throughout the New Testament.

When a group of Bible students arrive at the same conclusion but cannot agree amongst themselves on the arguments upon which the conclusion is built, there is usually cause for suspicion that the conclusion is faulty. They are accepting the creed because it has been dictated to them by their leader. They have very probably always believed the tenets of the group. They have not personally examined the arguments in detail, very often because they have had so little exposure to contrary points of view and have never been challenged. They may accept the excellent truths taught by their founder and in their enthusiasm swallow an error as part of “the package.” We are all prone to make this mistake. God requires of us a passionate desire to know the truth; we must stand personally responsible before Him for everything we teach as “the oracles of God.”

The Christadelphians are unable to agree about the identity of the Tempter of Jesus. Most contemporary Christadelphians insist that Jesus was talking to himself in the wilderness. Apart from the difficulty which this raises about the sinlessness of the Lord, it is arbitrary in the extreme to say that when Matthew reports that the Tempter “came up to Jesus and spoke” (Matt. 4:3), he meant that Jesus’ own mind

produced twisted versions of the Scriptures. Matthew ends the description of the Temptation by saying that the Devil departed and angels “came up to him” (Matt. 4:11) to minister to him. On what principle of interpretation can we justify taking the words “came up to him” in two totally different senses in the same paragraph? Where in Scripture does human nature come up to a person and speak, and hold an extended conversation? It is most unnatural to think that Jesus invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself! If the departure of Satan means the cessation of human nature’s temptation of Jesus, why may not the arrival of the angels be no more than the comfort of the spirit of God within him?! Can anyone fail to see that the treatment of Scripture which the Christadelphians propose in this passage involves the overthrow of the plain meaning of language?

The older Christadelphians are rightly indignant that anyone could suggest that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by his own mind. One Christadelphian writes: “Some think that the devil in the case of the temptation was Christ’s own inclination; but this is untenable in view of the statement that ‘when the devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him for a season.’ It is also untenable in view of the harmony that existed between the mind of Christ and the will of the Father (John 8:29). It might be added also that it is untenable because a tempter or devil, i.e. one who attempts to seduce to evil, is invariably a sinner (Matt. 18:7, RSV) whether it is oneself or another... [This is] illustrated also in Mark 4:19, ‘The lusts of other things entering in choke the word.’ Lusts, then, that ‘enter in’ and ‘draw away’ (James 1:14), being not legitimate desires... are forbidden and, therefore sin. Jesus was not thus ‘drawn away’ or inclined from the right and consequently could not have been the devil or ‘satan’ in the case. The devil was obviously a sinner who aimed to divert Jesus from the path of obedience and wrested the Scriptures (Ps. 91:11, 12) in the attempt. So that those who believe that Jesus himself was the ‘devil’ and Satan [i.e. fellow Christadelphians] make him a sinner, their protestations notwithstanding” (The “Devil” and “Satan” Scripturally Considered, by E.J.R.M., pp. 14, 15).

It is remarkable that the numerous attempts of the Christadelphians to explain away the personal Devil nearly always avoid a detailed analysis of Matthew 4, the temptation story. It should be obvious to any reader of the passage (it has been clear to millions of readers over the ages!) that an external person tempted Jesus; and that external person was called the Tempter, the Devil, the Satan. The use of the article means only that it is “the Devil we all know about.” (To suggest, as some Christadelphians do, that it was the High Priest is a desperate evasion) Scripture likewise speaks of “the Jesus” (with the definite article in Greek), that is, “the Jesus we all knew,” if the Devil is well known in Matthew’s mind, we must go to the Old Testament, the Intertestamental Jewish literature, and to the rest of the early Christian literature of the New Testament to find out what was meant by the personal name Satan.

There is not a single reference in the Old Testament to Satan as an internal tempter. The Serpent in Genesis was clearly not Eve’s human nature” It was an external personality who spoke and reasoned with refined subtlety. Likewise the “satans” of the OT (without the definite article) who provided opposition were invariably external persons. It is therefore amazing that anyone should propose that the devil of Matthew 4 (where the term occurs for the first time in the New Testament) is an internal “person,” i.e. human nature. The suggestion imposes an alien idea upon Scripture. Moreover, the “spiritualizing” method of exegesis necessary to obscure the fact that a real person came up to Jesus and spoke to him will, if applied elsewhere, render the whole biblical account meaningless. This very technique has been successfully used by the churches to do away with the millennial Kingdom of the Coming Age.

It is proper that we establish our understanding of biblical terms both from the evidence of Scripture as a whole and from sources current at the time of Jesus. We have ample evidence, for example, of the Kingdom of God referring to the future Messianic reign. We know from Matthew 4 that the Devil cannot be human nature; no such idea is to be found in the Old Testament. Nor can the Devil be an unknown human being. The presence of the definite article, which the Christadelphians have been keen to drop, forbids us to understand the Satan as an unknown person. The fact that Matthew introduces the Satan as well known to his readers shows that we must connect him with the external Satan of Job and Zechariah 3 and I Chronicles 21:1 (where Hebrew scholars take the reference to be a proper name).

It would be hard indeed to think that the Satan who appears amongst the Sons of God (whom the book of Job identifies with the angels: Job 38:7) and can “walk to and fro in the earth,” call down fire from heaven, generate whirlwinds and inflict Job with boils, was a human being. Was the Satan appearing

opposite the Angel of the Lord a man? (Zech. 3). Where in these passages is there the faintest hint that the Satan means human nature? And in the New Testament, on what principle shall we say that the “Prince of this world,” “the Father of lies,” “the Original Serpent,” “the god of this age,” “the roaring lion going about to destroy Christians,” “the one who shoots darts at us” is internal human nature? The idea that these are personifications and not a person is an invention created by liberal Protestants of the 19th century who rejected the supernatural and whose philosophy did not allow them to admit a spiritual personality in opposition to God. But man is in opposition to God. Why not a fallen angel? It is the teaching of the New Testament that Satan is an angel of darkness. Paul describes him as transformed into an angel of light (II Cor.11:14). A word study on the verb Paul used (*metaschematizetai*) will show that Satan changes his outward appearance to masquerade as an angel of light. He is by inward nature an angel, but he changes himself into an angel of light by an external transformation. Only an angel can become an angel of Light by this means. Paul states the belief, common to his contemporaries, that Satan is an angel, albeit a fallen one. He states the same thing in so many words in II Corinthians 11:3, 4, 14 where he identifies the Serpent with the transformed angel (verses 5-13 represent a parenthetical section).

This identification is well known, “in the writings of Paul’s contemporaries. It is clearly made in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. The fact that the Serpent of Genesis is to be crushed by the seed of the woman Eve alerts us to the fact that the Serpent continued to exist until the times of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15). The Serpent was cursed for its wickedness. It should hardly be necessary to point out that the curse was imposed because of the Serpent’s guilt. Every Christadelphian must weigh carefully whether to follow the Scripture at this point or embrace John Thomas’ extraordinary statement that the Serpent was “not morally accountable” — “it did not intend to deceive;” “it did not intend to lie;” it did not intend to cause the woman’s death” (Elpis Israel, p. 88). These statements from the founder of Christadelphianism will suffice to show that he has misunderstood the subject at the outset. He has God cursing an innocent creature! He goes on to propose his fundamental theory; that the Serpent is henceforth to be equated with the sin he produces; that “Satan” equals sin (Elpis Israel, p. 91). By this twist the real Devil disappeared as a synonym for human nature, where he has remained ever since, but mostly only in the minds of John Thomas’ followers!

Students of the Bible should never think that Satan is as powerful as God! He is not omniscient or omnipresent. Nor need he be feared by those who are properly instructed Christians and who seek the strength and protection of God, their Father. The Satan of the New Testament is the god of the present age — the age until the coming of the Kingdom (II Cor. 4:4). As Beliar (a common Jewish term for Satan) he is contrasted with the supernatural Christ (not with the “good” in human beings — II Cor. 6:15). He is also the prince of the demons (Matt 12:24). Jesus made no effort to challenge this idea. He assumes it along with a belief in the reality of demons. He had himself stated that Satan is chief of a host of angels (Matt. 25:41). Satan is also seen in conflict with Michael, the Archangel, in Jude 9. Any attempt to explain this passage in terms of human beings, as Christadelphianism does involves a desperate effort to eradicate supernatural evil from the Scriptures. This is matched only by John Thomas and his followers’ attempt to remove the demons from the gospel records and the epistles.

It is the Christadelphian attempt to explain the demons which demonstrates most clearly the extreme difficulty of trying to erase them from the New Testament records. Once again the Christadelphians cannot agree on the right explanation. They must deny that demons exist, because their creeds demand it. How to explain the constant presence of demons in the New Testament is a real problem. Their most detailed treatment of the demons is found in their publication *The Devil, the Great Deceiver*, quoted below. Many Christadelphians have not read carefully what Peter Watkins has to say, they are confident that his explanation must be sound, for it has been approved by the movement. Some, however, are beginning to question the traditional Christadelphian view of the demon stories; sensing that there is something amiss with the treatment of the subject by Roberts. To say that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament invested the term “demon” with a meaning unknown to the Greek language of the time is a bold theory indeed.

The average Christadelphian will propose that the demons of Scripture are to “be explained as an accommodation to the ignorance of the times. They will maintain that Jesus did not disturb the superstition of the contemporary Jews, in order to assist in the cure of the demon-possessed. The important question is whether there is any other example of Jesus allowing superstition to pass uncorrected. Another problem is Luke’s (and the other reporters of Jesus’ miracles) insistence that the demons spoke in their own person, and

recognized Jesus as the Messiah when the ordinary people did not. The New Testament records make an absolute distinction between the victim who is “demonized” and the demon who has possessed him. Jesus is concerned with addressing the demon as a person distinct from the sufferer...

Anthony Buzzard. (Restoration Fellowship)