

# Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 235

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## Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving greetings to all.

For many years it has seemed as if we were up against a brick wall in our effort to forward the spread of the true understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God who gave Himself for sinners, in opposition to the Christadelphian view of Him as the unclean representative of an unclean race, whose death was required for His own deliverance from sin. Our successes - and they have been few enough - seemed to come from abroad. We have had many kind letters and enquiries from far away places, yet here in the U.K. we have seen comparatively little response and it seems evident that the apathy and lukewarmness applies equally to those to whom we address our efforts.

Since the Christadelphian Ecclesias have opened up to free discussion of all Bible topics on their multitude of internet forums, there has been a remarkable rejection of the B.A.S.F. and many realise that Jesus did not die for Himself but only and solely for us, and neither is there such a thing as sin in the flesh. It is felt by many that the B.A.S.F. is not binding any more as there are thousands who never see a copy and are not instructed as to what it contains. What a good thing this is! Yet there is the danger that nothing better is put in its place.

“If God is relying on Christadelphians to grow His Kingdom, sadly the whole enterprise is bankrupt.” “The picture some Christadelphians paint of God is of a big “cop in the sky. I believe many Christadelphians also paint God as a kind of “Cosmic Pharaoh” who demands more and more from us.” “Many who leave Christadelphia, move on to other communities that share the “Real Truth” about God... the truth that He is love; that He is for us, not against us.” “I believe our Christadelphian community worldwide has some major problems! Our outreach is abysmal, our evangelism is appalling, and our attrition rate is disgusting! We tend to compass sea and land to make ‘proselytes’ to Christadelphia.” “Too little importance has been placed within the Christadelphian world on the aspect of living the Love of Christ. I have heard this lament more than a few times as the admission of my Christadelphian brethren.”

The above is just a tiny sample of what can be seen on Christadelphian forums. It makes sad reading as it shows there are many in that community who are searching for a better way and hope to find it through

rejecting Christadelphian doctrine yet are hindered in seeing their way past their Statement of Faith blinkers. Generations of 'Christadelphian thinking' is hard to shake off even when their teaching is seen to be false.

The danger now is that as doctrine is counting for less and less, and while living the Love of Jesus is growing in strength, which is a good thing of course, it is sound doctrine that is not being sought as if it were not really necessary because no one seem to agree just what sound doctrine really is. Christadelphian doctrine claimed to be the one and only 'truth' found in the Scriptures in spite of the endless arguments, contradictions and bitter divisions it engendered and this claim is now acknowledged as being so seriously flawed that it ought to be rejected altogether.

But truth courts investigation and this is where Christadelphianism was wrong for it would not let others speak for themselves for fear their 'truth' would suffer. As one writer expressed it: "The Doctor was pre-eminently a man of progress in the divine word. His last days were spent in considering flesh in a new aspect; but Robert. Roberts has reached "the summit of the whole truth," and there he proclaims his intention to "stand" on the top of his pillar. Well, let him "stand;" we prefer to "go on unto perfection," if by any means we may attain thereunto."

While writing the above I received an email from a correspondent in which he said:

"All of what you say would be true if the assumption that all Christadelphians hold fervently to the BASF were correct. This is for the most part an incorrect assumption – there are a few extremists who believe it to the letter, but let's face it, there are extremists in any religion. So why don't we change it? There are two reasons most people couldn't be bothered changing the BASF, and they are that it would cause too much division (not just on the nature of Christ, but on a number of points – where difference of opinion occurs, it doesn't always end happily), and that it just isn't necessary to change because most ecclesias don't even give it to the newly baptised anymore. It is fast becoming an irrelevance (in fact there are many people these days who don't even know it exists, let alone what it says). I think you would find that most people these days don't even know about the concept of sin in the flesh.

I think it is far too judgemental to paint the entire body of Christadelphia, with the same brush. They are all different, have different ideas and have Bible based debates constantly. There are those who believe in sin in the flesh, and those who don't. There are those who haven't even thought about the topic.

I look forward to the day when no one has heard of the BASF!!"

So what is the answer? We worship the Father in spirit when we live by the spirit, directing our desires to do only those things that please Him, mindful always of His presence. We worship God in truth when every aspect of our life is guided by His word of truth, speaking the truth one with another, and never profaning the word of God. As Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine..."

Surely we must ever be mindful of Jesus words to the woman at the well of Samaria, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23).

With Love to all, Russell Gregory

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## **Brother Phil Parry writes:**

When discussing the book of Genesis it is most frustrating to find people so blind and so obstinate that they cannot see that Genesis 2:16 is the sentence of death which Adam was conscious and guilty of by his

own action of trying to hide his transgression from God. The death sentence was clear in Adam's mind at once.

Most people ignore this fact and think the death sentence is described in God's words to Adam, to the woman and to the serpent which in effect did not speak of immediate death but of continuance of natural life and other resulting factors stated in Genesis chapter 3; with no mention of any change of physical nature apart from multiplying Eve's sorrow and conception of children and humility to her husband whom God addressed as "dust thou art", but very good in physical nature as created. The first man is of the earth earthy, said the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, but some person since Paul has produced another Adam of defiled condemned flesh of which there is no evidence in the Bible as stated in 1869 by two Christadelphians, Robert Roberts and Dr John Thomas.

Where did the false theory of Robert Roberts originate when there is no evidence of defiled condemned flesh in Genesis account of the sin of Adam? It comes from the misconception of Robert Roberts and others of St Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 3 which Paul says is the mystery (secret) hid through the ages but revealed unto him and other Apostles and servants of God – a legal standing in the sight of God, not a change of nature and defilement of the physical flesh. If you are baptised by immersion in water still believing natural death and return to dust is the penalty passed on you for Adam's sin then you will remain in the dust, the physical condemnation of flesh you believe in is completed in that you have not extracted yourself from the physical state of condemned flesh having ignored the appointed way through the sacrificial death of Christ Jesus; the death Adam would have suffered if Jesus had not been a willing sacrifice by the shedding of His blood.

How can any enlightened person possibly explain correctly how death by gradual decay could be passed upon Adam when it was clearly in operation from creation. If the law of sin and death were a physical condition of death by decay Paul could not have been made free from it and still remain alive, but some people are content to have it so.

I see no love or preference for Truth in such a position. Two Christadelphian Editors were however of this kind; John Carter and L.G.Sargent. John Carter stated "To talk of inherited sin is to talk jargon" (The Christadelphian 1958, page 372 and quoted by Ernest Brady in "Outrage On Justice"). L.G.Sargent, "It was not human nature that was held under judgment and condemned, but sin in all its manifestations and wherever it had sway," (Quoted in "Christadelphian Crisis", page 5 from The Christadelphian, March 1965)

No objections were made in public by their members. Why were people then and now, in fear of speaking their minds? They do now go a little way then they hesitate. Why?

Brother Phil Parry

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**P.S.** This could be sadly my last effort of trying to write due to being partially blind, but thanks to Brother Russell Gregory he can make sense of what I write from memory having read the Bible from the age of 17 years. Phil Parry.

**Editor's note:** This is sad news indeed for all readers of the Circular Letter, but understandable for as Phil tells us with age his sight is failing. For over 50 years he has given sterling service to His Lord and Master in writing the true Gospel and contending for the truth whenever and wherever he found an opportunity. His beloved wife Rene was a constant a loving support always and her loss is hard trial for Phil. But his writings are there and as long as people will read and search for truth his words will be there to help and guide. We are all here for such a short time in the great scheme of things but to have written and contended for the eternal truths that never change is a blessing and a privilege to those who give and to those who receive. We know we shall not always be the corruptible creatures we are now; one day as Isaiah tells us "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." May that day not be too far distant for our beloved Phil and Rene and indeed all of us who wait patiently for the return of Jesus. Meanwhile our most loving and affectionate greetings to Phil and our grateful thanks for his unflinching support over the years. "The Lord bless thee, and

keep thee: and make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give the peace

Love from Helen and Russell.

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## One Big Fraternal Gathering – When?

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Love and Greetings in Christ Jesus.

There are times when we are able to speak for the Truth to our orthodox friends and have regretted that there is no meeting nearby to which we could invite them to hear us further, or a suitable pamphlet free from contention and strife, stating a few facts of the Kingdom and the Name.

Why are all these facilities possessed by our Christadelphian friends? Of course, there are Christadelphian meetings where a good framework of God's plan of salvation is told, but the filling in is all wrong; therefore we feel it safer to leave our friends with the message we have delivered trusting that their mind will be occupied by it.

No doubt some of our friends would soon be shocked at some of the things proclaimed. I met a friend a few days ago who was very emphatic upon the purity of Jesus – 'He was no son of Adam, and was free from the claim of sin' – very cheering to find. But talking together further my friend believed too much. Jesus, in his opinion was from everlasting; He was present when it was said 'Let us make man in our image' – words from the Holy Trinity; then in some mysterious way He became a babe.

Strange that men with big brains can yield to this – how much better if religious people paid more heed to what is written. The Gospel is so simple and the preaching of the Cross appears to some to be foolishness, and much filthy gain is got out of it by making it a mystery.

"The Almighty immortal God hath died for men" are words of a hymn I used to sing when a Wesleyan Methodist.

Always the impossible for salvation, it is also impossible for salvation if we hold that Jesus had sins of His own in His flesh to atone for – how could He make both one and break down the middle wall of partition?

No unclean thing could enter the veil, and I take it that 'sin in our flesh' is a state of uncleanness and a blemish.

As a Christadelphian I was always proud of the many well educated among us, such as doctors, professors, and scientists, kind and good men, but who were unable to give a reasonable and sensible talk upon the Sacrifice of Christ.

If Jesus had sin, if He suffered all the effects at Adam's transgression - even the death that passed upon all men - there was no sacrifice. I take it some still hold to this view.

When they come to their true senses and see what they are losing, to be without a sacrifice and delete such errors of doctrine, we will have one big fraternal gathering.

With Fraternal Love. F. Skinner.

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## Letter from George Armonis - 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008:

Dear Russell

My name is George Armonis, and I am writing to you because the Logos Editor has given me your Magazine wherein are your comments against myself and Logos teachings. Sadly, you have misrepresented me, and have ignored the clear teachings of the Scriptures on the matters you criticize. You have made some strong accusations against me, and have presented some unscriptural statements in regard to the Christadelphian beliefs. But your answer is both unscriptural and illogical. And it will lead astray from the saving truths of the Scriptures, ignoring the true exposition of the Apostle Paul.

You claim that I believe that “Jesus entered Heaven itself before he had obtained Eternal Redemption.” I say no such thing, and the article which you criticize was designed to show that the Lord Jesus received Eternal Redemption through his atoning Sacrifice. As far as believers are concerned, they minister in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, as a position of status, elevated from the Gentile spirit of ignorance and wickedness, and covered by the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. We are physically on Earth, but our spiritual status is in the “heavenlies,” being “in Christ” who has thus entered into the symbolic Most Holy on behalf of his people. Yet “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”, and the purpose for the ascension of Christ to the Heaven of heavens was to sit on the right hand of the Almighty, as our great High Priest, and this he did after his glorification by the Angel of Yahweh’s Presence here on Earth.

In Hebrews 9:12, the Apostle Paul said that the Lord “entered into the Most Holy Place,” according to the original Greek. I pointed out that the Greek verb is in the middle voice, in the participle form, and in the continuing sense. The middle voice emphasizes that the Lord found eternal redemption for himself, the participle indicates that the Lord becomes a partaker by necessity of this action (redemption), and the continuing tense means that the Lord “finds” that redemption for others, but that redemption has not yet been received by them, although it has for himself, being redeemed from the nature that came about by Edenic transgression.

You refer to 1 John 1:6-7, and we note that verse 7 speaks of “...the blood of Christ His Son cleanseth us from all [plural] sin [singular]. A Christadelphian writer has explained: “The word sin is used in two principle acceptations in the Scriptures...” These two “acceptations,” being two forms of sin, are to be clearly seen in verses 8 and 9 of this chapter. Verse 8 explains: “If we say that we have no sin...” Notice that the Apostle does NOT say, “if we do not commit sin, and there is an obvious difference between “having not sin and “not committing sin”. So, what is the “sin” that we have in our possession, according to the Apostle John? Is it not the sin nature inherited from our first parents? Is it not the cause of all our failings and transgressions, as admitted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:7, as the sin that dwelleth in him? Transgressions are actions performed; they are not the sin “dwelling in us.” It would be completely foolish for Paul to speaking of “transgressions dwelling in me”. The sin mentioned by Paul in Romans 7 is the physical principle within us called “the law of sin and death”. Thus we are dying because of this law of sin that came about by the transgression of Adam and Eve, the wages of which was “death” as {Romans 6:23} clearly explains. This condition included the Lord Jesus in his mortality. He “died unto the sin once” {Romans 6:10}. He could not die unless he was mortal, and that mortality was the wages of transgression.

The other aspect is in verse 9 of John 1: “If we confess our sins [the transgressions we have committed] He is faithful...” The sin nature we possess, and the transgressions we commit, are clearly the “two principle acceptations” of the use of the word “sin” in the Scriptures. There are other examples in the New Testament to illustrate the two aspects, forms or categories of sin.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ never transgressed the law of his God - for which he could never required forgiveness - it follows that it was from his sin’s flesh that he had to find “eternal redemption,” and for which he diligently sought. He did NOT find it by accident, no mere change. But Scripture certainly requires that he did “find eternal redemption.”

As I have read your article, I have come against three wrong teachings from your pen: [1] That Christ died as a substitute; [2] That human salvation, not God manifestation, was the purpose of the Eternal Spirit; and [3] There is no sin in the flesh whatever. Please consider the following statements and think carefully:

[1] “Only those in Adam are in need of redemption” You seem to leave out all together the Lord Jesus from his association with all “in Adam”, for he clearly came in the line of humanity. Paul says “For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same...” Does this not teach that Christ was in the family of Adam and thus in need of redemption? You obviously overlook the emphasis in the words of the apostle: “he - also - himself- likewise...”

[2] “Jesus never needed redemption.” IF this was the case, why then did the Master in the days of his flesh, consistently went to his Father in prayer with “strong tears and supplications unto Him Who was able to save him out of [Gr. *ek*] the death” [Hebrews 5:7]? If, as you have suggested, that the Lord “earned the title of immortality” before he went upon the stake, did he not plead in the garden that the Father might “take away the cup of suffering,” declaring “not my will but Thine be done”? These are not the words of a man who needed no redemption.

We now come to your statement that “He gave his life [atonement/*lutron*] for many - for all - for us” and such like. You seem to forget that the Lord has done those things on our behalf, for the Greek “*hyper emon*” literally means “on behalf of us.” In order to participate in God’s redemption, we must not seek doctrines of fig leaves, but apply the principles enumerated in Romans 6:1-13, a complete identification with the redemption found not obtained by the Lord Jesus. There is no redemption apart from that possible in the Lord Jesus, for such redemption commences in him. Incidentally, the statement of Daniel 9:26, that “not for himself is not in the original Septuagint translation of the Seventy who set themselves to translate the Hebrew into Greek.

I now answer point [3], in which you imply that “there is no sin in the flesh.” Yet, in Romans 8:3 we are told that “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Some say that the word “likeness” means similar to. But what is similar to sinful flesh, but sinful flesh itself. In fact, the contrast it being made by the apostle Paul to the divine nature. Though Father of the Lord Jesus, God’s nature was not possible for a man untested, and who came as the Son of the Virgin Mary, to have a different nature from that of his mother. Thus whatever is describe by Paul as “sinful flesh” [Greek “flesh fall of sin”], was the nature of Jesus through birth. Let me use your analogy: “James having obtained a revolver, shot the lion [in the street]...” Now please explain how could James shoot the lion, IF there was no lion? OR, {let me put it in this way} How could the Almighty condemn sin in the flesh, IF there was no such tiling in the flesh”? Do you not see the connection in that verse between “sinful flesh” and “sin in the flesh?

Finally, if Christ did not need redemption how is it that Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, place before us the following order: Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming, then the end [the end of the 1000 year millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ]? Could we change that order? Absolutely not.

And just to express a few thoughts on your “conclusions” {page 20}. You speak of a “natural life.” This is quite confusing. Life is life. It can be life without condemnation {as was Adam’s without transgression}, or life bearing the law of “sin and death” {such as ALL mankind, since transgression}, or eternal life {such as is held by the Father, the Lord Jesus at his resurrection to life, and the angels}- But the term “natural life” says nothing. When you say that Jesus needed no redemption, you clearly ignore Romans 6:12, which is the whole point of my article which you have wrongly criticized. And since we do not presently possess “eternal redemption,” we find it only in the Lord Jesus whose blood achieved it for himself and all in him {Heb 9:12 as I have according to Greek Grammar explained previously, and in this letter}.

Sincerely, George Armonis.

## **In reply I wrote:**

Dear George, Thank you for your letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

You say I misrepresent you; I can only apologise for my error. I assure you I have no wish to misrepresent what you wrote and I published your article in good faith believing it was what you meant, so

when you said:- *“Thus, Christ first enters the holy place. Why? In order to obtain eternal redemption. Why so? Because he did not beforehand possess it...”* I thought you meant that Jesus entered Heaven itself in order to obtain Eternal Redemption. But now you write “I say no such thing”! I am pleased to hear this; but I confess I am at a loss to know how this misrepresents what you said.

And I strongly disagree with you when you say I ignore the clear teachings of Scripture.

Yes, I know your “article was designed to show that the Lord Jesus received Eternal Redemption through His atoning sacrifice.” And my article shows that Jesus did not receive Eternal Redemption through His atoning sacrifice – Eternal Life was already His before He was crucified. I feel you haven’t given due consideration to the Scriptures I presented. Also I agree with and hold to every quotation of scripture you have referenced but I do not agree with some of your interpretations of them and here is why:

The Christadelphian argument starts on the assumption that natural death is the wages of sin. This is in common with almost every Christian denomination but it is an assumption and not an established fact. It is not the teaching of scripture.

May I present an example of what I mean? When a convicted criminal is sentenced to death he is duly executed in accordance with the law of the land in which he lives. The death he would have died in old age is quite another matter and it takes but little thought to know which death the convicted criminal would prefer. The choice is between natural death and judicial death. But Christadelphians say there is no difference between the two -- that natural death is the judicial death for sin. I do not believe it is. There is a much more sensible way of reasoning without having to depend on an assumption to start with and I will ask you if you will please consider this as a possibility as we proceed. It is not wise to build on sand when there is ample rock nearby. If at the end you decide against the points I put forward, so be it, but please first hear me out.

The next assumption is the view that there was implanted in Adam’s flesh a sin-nature, a physical principle of decay, which thus brought about the ultimate penalty. The Bible does not say so and we do not believe there is any such sin-nature. I agree with Dr Thomas when he wrote in answer to a correspondent,

“The life and death of Adam and Eve were predicated, not upon any peculiarity of their animal constitution, but upon the relation they might come to sustain to the two trees in Paradise. From this we learn that they pleased themselves under the law which sentenced them to death. From these premises it will be seen that we dissent from our correspondent’s notion that all creation became corrupt, by which we understand him to mean, constitutionally impregnated with corruptibility at the fall. We believe that the change was moral, not physical” (“Herald of The Kingdom,” volume 5, page 159).

Dr Thomas here says “the change was moral not physical” and we agree, but would add that it was not only moral but emphasise that this was Adam’s legal position in relation to the law of sin and death.

What God said was “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” and this refers to a judicial death - the death for sin. When Adam sinned he incurred the death penalty. Scripturally Adam forfeited his life and became a servant of Sin as his Master. His life was in pledge to Sin and all his offspring to whom he transmitted his life (Adamic life) were therefore born into that same legal position – all in bondage to Sin, or “concluded under sin” as Paul expresses it. This life was not transmitted to Jesus.

Yes, Jesus had the same flesh nature as the rest of the human race but He had a new life direct from the source of all life - as did Adam in the beginning. This is the reason for the Virgin Birth.

When Adam was given the law of sin and death he understood what God meant - “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” God gave Adam the law and told him what would be the consequence of breaking it. God didn’t deceive Adam into supposing He meant a thousand years when He said “in the day”. Deceiving is lying. God meant what He said. After breaking the command, Adam was no longer considered a son of God but a bond-servant of Sin.

As Dr Thomas stated and as we believe, there is no evidence in scripture of a change in Adam's nature. This is the myth of the Apostate Churches, and by way of example I quote from Article Nine of "The Thirty-nine Articles" of the Church of England :-

"Original sin... is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh... is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized; yet the Apostle doth confess that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin."

Christadelphian teaching is merely a variation of this.

This teaching, whether it be Article Nine, or Clause 5 of the B.A.S.F., or simply that "that which was imposed on our first parents was the law of death, the 'dying thou shalt die' sentence which defiled and became a physical law of their being" (Graeham Mansfield), – this change of flesh nature is also an assumption never having been proven from Scripture. Adam and Eve sinned while in the very good flesh with which God created them - and so do we.

So we find two assumptions as the foundation of Christadelphian beliefs (along with nearly every denomination):

- 1) that natural death (the death that is common to all men - Moses) is the wages of sin, and
- 2) that there was a change in the nature of Adam's flesh due to his transgression.

But the facts are these:

- 1) the punishment for transgression of God's law is judicial death, i.e. a putting to death, and
- 2) there is no such thing as sinful flesh, flesh full of sin, or sin in the flesh.

Let us further consider the fact that the punishment for sin is judicial death. Genesis 2:17, "dying thou shalt die" is a Hebrew idiom used to emphasise the certainty of a thing. There are at least ten occasions in the Old Testament where the expression "dying thou shalt die" is found. Just two examples should suffice for now; Genesis 20:7, Abimelech is warned that he would die if he did not return Sarah to Abraham. It is quite obvious God was referring to judicial death - death for disobedience. Abimelech obeyed and lived. But in 1 Kings 2:37, King Solomon told Shimei, "For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head." Shimei disobeyed and was put to death. In light of such scriptures we can safely say that Adam was warned of judicial death to be carried out the very day he transgressed God's commandment.

But Adam was not put to death the day he sinned because God showed him mercy and loving kindness. However, instead, there was the death of the animal (lamb?) that day which provided Adam with a covering for his sin; a covering which was only temporary until Jesus came as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" as stated by John the Baptist. Also consider Hebrews 9:22 "Without the shedding of blood is no remission."

Next, we agree that "the word sin is used in two principle acceptations in the Scriptures" but you write: "The sin nature we possess, and the transgressions we commit, are clearly the 'two principle acceptations' of the use of the word 'sin' in the Scriptures." Not so. Sin nature is not one of the two ways in which sin is considered.

We accept, of course, that sin is transgression of law (1 John 3:4). It is a simple concept that law gives choice. Indeed, it is law alone which can give choice, and sin is transgression of law. We do wrong whenever we choose to break God's law and we do right when we choose to keep His law. It is a matter of law and it is a matter of free choice, therefore belongs to what is legal and what is illegal.

However, the second principle has nothing to do with “sin nature” but with the fact that we are “concluded under sin”- and this is for the purpose of our salvation as Paul tells us in Galatians 3:22 - “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” We are born of Adam’s forfeited life and so we can have no hope of eternal life unless we are born again, born of water and of the Spirit. When we are baptised into the death of Jesus we rise to newness of life in Jesus, and He tells us “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” - John 5:24, and again we read in 1 John 5:13, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” Paul confirms this in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”

True Baptism through faith in Jesus atoning sacrifice reverses our standing from being alienated from God because we were ‘in Adam’, to being children of God by adoption because we are now ‘in Christ’ and so have passed from death into life. There is now no condemnation for those in Christ.

The “sin nature” of which you talk is not, and cannot be reversed at baptism. 1 John 1:7-9, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”, is explained in the most satisfactory way for the blood of Jesus in the first instance cleanses, or frees, the faithful from being concluded under the sin of Adam, and secondly the faithful are forgiven their sins for Jesus’ sake. Again, Hebrews 9:22, for without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins and as it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4) but Jesus did, and this proves then that natural death cannot be the wages of sin.

I am surprised at your use of Romans 8:3. I am sure you know, or you should know, Paul did not say “sinful flesh” and nowhere in scripture is the literal flesh described as sinful. People are sinners by their actions and these actions do not make their flesh sinful, but their characters. Paul said that Jesus came in flesh similar to or in the likeness of the flesh owned by Sin as a Master. Jesus belonged to God; He was God’s possession and came to do God’s will as His servant. He never sinned and so never belonged to ‘Sin’ although He came in the likeness of Sin’s flesh, i.e. like the flesh owned by Sin. You know “sinful flesh” is in the possessive case and means “sin’s flesh”, i.e. flesh belonging to sin.

But I will conclude by quoting the words of another:-

“Romans 8:3 - “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

“Why so much determined blindness surrounds this one verse is beyond comprehension. It is nothing short of an obstinate refusal to face facts and an unreasonable desire to believe the superstition of sin-in-the-flesh. This one verse is the mainstay of all Christadelphian argument and there are many leaders determined to keep it that way knowing full well it cannot be upheld. Briefly, what the law could not do was save people who kept it because of itself it was insufficient to give immortality. It needed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to fulfil its purpose. It was the “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” That is, the Law showed the way to Christ who alone made possible the way of salvation through His sacrifice. The weakness of the flesh lay in the fact that no other man could by any means save himself or others the reason being is because his life is already forfeit and is of no value as a sacrifice - it belonged to Sin and so it was necessary for God to send His own Son in flesh like sin’s flesh. Not in the likeness of sinful flesh - that is not what Paul wrote, he wrote “in the likeness of sin’s flesh” and he knew what he meant - flesh owned by Sin which includes every human being whose life is derived from Adam - i.e. “Scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Galatians 3:22). Jesus Christ had His life anew from His Father and being born of a woman He had flesh like the rest of us but it was not “concluded under sin.” Not sinful flesh, for such a concept is not taught in the Bible - Jesus Christ was in the flesh like anyone else’s flesh - like sin’s flesh, but not belonging to King Sin - and by His perfect life He condemned sin by showing that people are able to overcome temptation if they are determined to and seek God’s help in doing so (Moses taught this lesson to the Israelites in Exodus 20:20 “And Moses said unto the people, Fear not; for God is come to prove you and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not”), so that Jesus condemned sin while He was in the flesh. When else could

He have done it? Having condemned sin while in flesh like our flesh He then offered His life as the perfect sacrifice to redeem Adam.”

I sincerely hope you will give due consideration to these matters and so worship God in Spirit and in truth as He so desires.

With Love in Jesus. Russell

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## **Predestinated According to the Good Pleasure of His Will**

**Ephesians 1:4-12**

What a great revelation of the loving and merciful Creator we have been called upon to acknowledge and accept as our Father, through His Son Jesus, when we read the Epistle of Paul to the believers at Ephesus! What better hope; what better assurance could we have than Paul describes in Ephesians 1:4,5? “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...”

We can also be assured that “even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” – “for God hath not cast away his people” which he foreknew. (Romans 11). Jesus Himself confirms that this is so where He says to the Jews who believed Him not, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:28.).

If you look up the following scripture references you will see that our present position and relationship to Jesus and the Father is not one of our own choosing, neither by our own works, and it makes us feel very humble and very grateful even as the Psalmist who said “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?” But then with Paul, we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour and who will have dominion over the work of thy hands, when thou hast put all things under his feet.” (Psalm 8:3-6).

Now, the references as follows: Romans 1:1-6, Titus 1:1-3, 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:20, Revelation 13:8, Galatians 4:4.

While on holiday in Scotland in May 1979 we stayed a few nights in Oban during which time, on the Monday of the 21<sup>st</sup> of that month my wife and I were instrumental in the baptism of our Brother John Carter, an ex-Christadelphian who in isolation had learned much from literature sent to him by Brother Brady on account of whom he thanked God that he had been enabled to see the Light and we heard him express those thanks to God many times while we were with him and shared his joy. During our stay in the hotel I had a friendly conversation with a man sitting next to me while we were congregated after dinner in the lounge. It appeared he had come over with his wife from Canada for a holiday and was touring Scotland, but was actually a native of England but had emigrated some years ago. It was not long before we were discussing Christianity, the Kingdom of God and the resurrection. It was unfortunate that we did not meet again but I was quite struck by what he said about the resurrection. He was emphatic that the prerogative was that of the Creator, and resurrection was selective; it was confirmation of what I believed and yet had not even told him what my view was on the subject. It was indeed remarkable that I should come across an isolated case of this sort – a man who describes resurrection as being selective and in harmony with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, in contrast with the erroneous theories held by many, namely, that the selection takes place after resurrection and a standing before a judgment-seat of Christ similar to a court of assize where a judge had to hear evidence from others before he can pass sentence of guilty or not guilty. In the latter case

resurrection cannot be selective yet Paul speaks of many of the servants of God being tortured for their faith not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Now if we are expected by certain people to believe in a general resurrection of corruptible and responsible beings at the coming of Christ in order to be selected or rejected, where is the “better resurrection” of which Paul speaks seeing that corruptible resurrection applies equally to all? Surely we should not wrest out of their context any of Paul’s statements in reference to resurrection, or twist them in order to bolster up what could be a false premise on such a subject. Now we know and believe that all human beings owe their natural existence to the sacrifice of Christ and that when God prospectively slew His own Lamb in Eden to spare Adam the death he had incurred by sin, this also affected Adam’s posterity as members of his body. So Paul could say in his letter to the Romans chapter 5 verse 6, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly – God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” It is quite easy therefore to understand Paul’s teaching here. The sacrifice of Christ (His life) was a ransom for all and will never be offered again. This secured our natural existence but unless we associate ourselves with the death of Christ through faith and baptism, our redemption and reconciliation will not be secured and we shall not be saved by His life.

How could we have been sinners when Christ died on the cross? We were not in existence at that time and could not therefore actively sin. The answer from Paul in Romans 5 is quite simple again. He explains that we were in the loins or members of the One Adamic Body when sin was committed and so all Adam’s posterity were constituted sinners, but not subject to the penalty Adam incurred by individual sin which was ‘inflicted death.’ God spared Adam that death as we have stated through the death of Jesus which was inflicted. When we become enlightened that same penalty of inflicted death hangs over us and the only escape is symbolic death by baptism into the death of Christ and rising in newness of life.

The explanation of Paul is quite plain if we realize that Adam was already created corruptible and that by his disobedience all were reckoned as legally dead. (Romans 5:15). “Sold under sin” Paul describes as our “old man” in Romans 6 - or ‘body related to sin’ which in baptism is crucified with Christ that the “body of sin” might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin as a Master.

I am at a loss to conceive how a Christadelphian could write to me and say that the “body of sin” here quoted was physical – “a body of flesh and blood” when Paul was really stating ownership and relationship; a legal state which could be changed without changing the flesh and blood nature or destroying it in the physical sense, for it is a body of flesh and blood that goes under the baptismal water and it is the same body of flesh and blood that comes up again. Now if we are dead with Christ and consequently dead unto sin, what is natural death but a means of rest from our service to righteousness, to be renewed at the resurrection of the just in incorruptibility?

So much for the confusion that results from mixing the legal with the physical, and natural corruptibility with the death that came by sin.

I apologize for digressing a little from the subject of predestination but I had to show that despite the fact that God has predestinated certain people from the foundation of the world, this does not justify the theories of the Fatalists such as for example, “If my name is on a bullet or a bomb, nothing can prevent my death and what has to be will be, so live as you please.”

This is not biblical predestination as Jesus taught and as Paul teaches in Ephesians chapter 1; we have to do certain things, not sit back and do nothing just because our names are in the Book of Life. They can be blotted out by our own misconduct, and though Paul believed in predestination, this did not prevent him from exhorting the churches to strive at all time to make their calling and election sure. If we heed this advice and hold fast the faith, we can justify our election for we have indeed made a covenant with God through Sacrifice even that of His Son, and in due time He will gather His elect. The following is a quotation from the late Andrew Wilson: “When God commands His angels to ‘Gather my saints together unto me’ there instantly follows an adjectival clause to “Saints” which restricts the applicability to those alone who have

made “a covenant with God by sacrifice”. The angels who obey God’s will, assuredly will gather those that have made a covenant with God by sacrifice but not another human soul dare they gather.

Please observe how the Master clinches and restricts this resurrectional responsibility question, viz. “I am the resurrection, and the life. All those (then instantly follows an adjectival clause of restriction to the antecedent ‘those’) whom the Father hath given me” shall I loose nothing but raise it up again at the consummation of the age.” Thus that adjectival clause of restriction debars even Jesus from raising one human soul whom God hath not given Him.

These are words of Divine authority bearing witness to the truth of predestination as taught by the apostle Paul providing we are followers of him, even as he also was of Christ after his conversion from the zeal for the works of the Law to the faith which cometh by love. There was no diminishing of Paul’s zeal for God but after conversion to Christ his zeal was according to knowledge and understanding through the Spirit of Christ and he came to a greater realization of the great love and mercy of God toward man in the provision of His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life and share in those things which eye hath not seen or ear heard neither hath entered into the heart of man, but which Paul said, God had revealed to the Apostles by His Spirit.

Here in the letter to the Ephesians we find a very different Paul to the one described in the Acts of the Apostles breathing out threatenings against the Christians. He can now see that justification by the works of the Law was an impossibility and that if righteousness could ever be achieved by the Law alone then Christ was dead in vain. He realizes now that salvation and eternal life is the gift of God through His Son and not of works and his deep gratitude for such a revelation is shown in his epistles. He says, “For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel; whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by (or on account of) Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:1-11)

It may appear surprising to certain people that the emphasis of Paul’s teaching in all his epistles is on being presented to Christ as a glorious church even as the Bride of Christ taken out of His side that was pierced on Calvary in the like figure that Eve was taken from the side of Adam – bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Not even in the 1 Corinthians chapter 15, known as the resurrection chapter does Paul make any reference of a judgement seat, all he does is contend for a resurrection of those who are Christ’s at His coming. This is the very doctrine of selection of which my friend in Scotland spoke. Paul confirms it in verses 23,24, “But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christs at his coming” - the fruits which will resemble Christ obviously (verse 20). There is no mention of an assize in verse 24, but the fact that Jesus has begun His reign on earth and when that reign is ended the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and He will then give up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. This is not Saul of Tarsus; this is Paul who witnessed that Christ was risen in Glory and become the first-fruits of them that sleep in Christ and predestinated to be conformed to His image. This is Paul, a servant now of Jesus Christ through the will of God, a phrase with which he commences nearly all his epistles and shows his concern for the church of Christ that it might be established soundly on the foundation of the Holy Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. No pointing to a fearful looking for of Judgment but to the coming of the glorified Jesus he saw on his way to Damascus with written authority from the Jewish High Priest to persecute Christ’s servants.

The reason for this coming, says Paul, “to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.” Paul sought to establish a state of serenity among the believers concerning the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him, “that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled neither by spirit, nor by word, nor buy letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.” (2

Thessalonians 2:2). What better note to end on this subject of predestination than the words of Paul to the Thessalonians? “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17).

Many have erred on the teaching of the resurrection, some that it is past already, some that it is incomplete without a process; “nevertheless, says Paul, by the Spirit of Christ vested in him, The foundation of God standeth sure (and other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ) having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” 2 Timothy 2:18,19). “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: wherefore comfort one another with these words. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Phil Parry - 7<sup>th</sup> February 1984.

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## Correspondence from Peru

**12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2008.** Dear Sir/Madam, Let me introduce myself...My name is Jorge Velasquez Pomar, I am a 47 years old physician and Professor of Clinical Microbiology.

Last year I met some Central Christadelphian missionaries in my country and I was very impressed by their knowledge of the Word. For the first time in my life I could talk to Christian people sharing my conviction about the Oneness of God. Unfortunately with time passing by, I knew that Christadelphianism was split in many groups (Central, Bereans, Unamended, Dawn...) I decided then to study carefully the doctrinal differences between the Ecclesias in order to make a conscious choice. Eventually this personal search lead me away from the main Christadelphian doctrine (all groups included) in some important issues:

1. I believe in the **immortal emergence** of those who are asleep “in Christ” at the first resurrection,
2. I believe that the death of Jesus was a **voluntary substitution** for us.
3. I believe that Edenic condemnation was exclusively **alienation from God** and not physical defilement.
4. I believe that at no point of His earthly life, Jesus was alienated from His Father God, in other words, Jesus was **legally free** from Edenic condemnation and in the same position as Adam prior to transgression.

I decided then to leave the Christadelphian study group despite the fact that two missionaries were surprisingly disposed to accept these differences as long as I made my confession of faith correctly!

Impossible to me to accept such invitation, I would have become schizophrenic.

I'd really like to keep in contact with you about our Unitarian Faith. I'm sure your experience and knowledge could be extremely helpful to me. Thank you in advance.

May God bless you. Jorge Velasquez Pomar

**14<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2008.** Dear Jorge, It was a joy to us to receive your email of the 12<sup>th</sup> December. Most of us in the Nazarene Fellowship were Christadelphians once until we came to realise some of the errors in their teachings.

It is very pleasing to find we are in harmony regarding all the matters you mention and we also feel these are the most important issues if we are to worship God in Spirit and in truth.

We are only a small group and scattered all over the world, though you are our first contact from South America.

We publish a magazine every two months and would be very pleased to add your name and address to our mailing list, and with this in mind we would be very pleased if you will allow us to publish your email in our next Issue due out at the end of January. We would only put your name to it with your permission.

We wonder how you came to hear of us – did you find our website, or perhaps you came across one of our booklets?

Thank you for emailing us and we look forward to hearing from you again.

With love in Jesus Name. Russell Gregory.

**14<sup>th</sup> Dec 2008.** Dear Russell, Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, thank you for responding to my email.

I came across your web page because in a number of texts written by some Christadelphian authors and quoted by my instructor, I could find the term “Free life”, referred as being a “heresy” held by the “renunciators”. When I asked the question about this “heresy” to my instructor he became uncomfortable and he didn’t really answer to the question, so I had to find the answer myself. From an article published in Wikipedia I learnt about the Nazarene Fellowship and this article has a link with your web site. Praise the Lord!

Of course I would be very happy if you added my name and address to your mail list and also if you published my email under my name in your bimonthly magazine.

May God bless you, Jorge

**29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2008.** Dear Jorge, Thank you for your interesting email of the 18th. The Lord works in wonderful ways and we have every good reason to be very thankful.

I would be grateful for your postal address so that I can add it to our mailing list. Also I can send you some recent issues of our "Circular Letter" together with some of our booklets.

**12<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2009.** Dear Russell, I've just received your interesting booklets and circular letters in the mail. Many thanks for your effort to let me know your interpretation of the Scripture. I totally agree with Helen Brady when she writes in the preface of her father's book “Christ's Death and your Salvation”:-

*“It will be obvious to those who agree or who are familiar with Nazarene Fellowship views that although we believe many of the things that Christadelphians believe our different views about the nature of man and the meaning of the Atonement places between us a gulf wider by far than separates Christadelphians from Roman Catholics”*

Yes indeed, the Christadelphian doctrine about the Atonement is an unbearable blasphemy! Very soon I will write an article in Spanish about this topic, and send it to all those misguided Christadelphian students, because their hope of Salvation is endangered by this error.

May God bless His people Israel and give them the courage to endure the adversity until the day of our Lord’s return. Jorge.

## Letter from Geoff Maycock:

Dear Russell

Thank you for sending me your comments on Richard Pursell's book. In the main, I understand the points you have raised, and I am in general agreement with your position. Certainly, the issue of sin's flesh versus sinful flesh and all its consequences is clear. In your newsletters, you have consistently commented adversely on the BASF Clause 8 which says that Christ possessed condemned nature and that he needed his own sacrifice to atone for it. One of the most startling things about the untold story, is that Richard Pursell claims that Robert Roberts never understood Clause 8 in this way. Do you accept that conclusion? Certainly it seems to me that Clause 8 as currently written cannot describe accurately both the 'Central' and the 'Unamended/Advocate' position, still less the Nazarene one.

However, I would appreciate your comment on a rather separate issue, which you clearly feel strongly about, and I find really confusing. You obviously regard the distinction between 'corruptible' and 'mortal' as of some importance. However, it has always seemed to me that your definition of 'mortal' is not what most people's intuitive understanding of the term is, and I see in the latest newsletter (just arrived) that others (e.g. Tony) have a similar difficulty. Your definition (or Brother Turney's) is that 'mortal' means 'destined to die through breach of law'. Unfortunately no English dictionary I have consulted has this definition. The Oxford English Dictionary has: **adjective:** **1** subject to death. **2** causing death. **3** (of fear, pain, etc.) intense. **4** (of conflict or an enemy) lasting until death; never to be reconciled. **5** without exception; imaginable: *every mortal thing*. **6** Christian Theology (of a sin) regarded as depriving the soul of divine grace. The Free On-line dictionary has as its primary meaning 'liable or subject to death', or (of living beings, esp. humans) 'destined to die sometime rather than living forever'. This latter definition emphasises the presumption that mortal and immortal are mutually exclusive terms. As a human being, you're either one or the other, there is no third state. There is no mention of law in any of these definitions. It may well be as you say in the Newsletter that the word mortalize used to mean to make mortal - but even that does not imply make mortal by infringement of law. In any case, it seems much more helpful to express what we believe to be true in modern English; otherwise we are speaking in an unknown tongue.

Even more to the point however, is that neither of the words translated 'mortal' in the Old or New Testaments seems to require the 'breach of law' condition. In fact, it seems to me that combining mortality with legal conditions confounds two concepts which are better kept separate - mortality is physical, and matters of law are not. Confining myself to the Greek (New Testament), my lexicon has this to say about the words involved:

**2348** θνήσκω [*thnesko /thnay·sko/*]. A strengthened form of a simpler primary *thano* (**than**-o, which is used for it only in certain tenses); 13 occurrences; translates as "be dead" 10 times, "die" once, "dead man" once, and "dead" once. **1** to die, to be dead. **2** metaph. to be spiritually dead.

**2349** θνητός [*thnetos /thnay·tos/*]. From 2348; Six occurrences; AV translates as "mortal" five times, and "mortality + 3588" once. **1** liable to death, mortal. The passages are: Romans 6:12; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54; 2 Corinthians 4:11 and 5:4.

Your statement at the top of page 15 in the Newsletter to the effect that those in Christ are no longer 'mortal' because they are no longer under the sentence of death points up the problem. Paul in Romans 8:11 tells his Christian audience, that the spirit will quicken their mortal bodies - I presume he is thinking of the resurrection. But the point is that at the time of writing the letter, the Christians he addresses are still in their 'mortal' bodies. What Paul says in Romans 8:1 is that these Christians because they are in Christ are free of condemnation - they are not free of mortality until the resurrection. This is why it is important (it seems to me) to keep the physical (mortality) separate from the legal (condemnation).

And to be honest, I cannot see why the commonly understood meaning of mortal should not be appropriate for any member of 'homo sapiens' at any time since their creation. I would argue that in the creation described in Genesis 1 all the animal creation including man was made 'liable or subject do death' - and in the case of the human animal, the word 'mortal' would therefore be appropriate. The traditional view

common I think to us all is that the breath of life from God empowered both man and the animals in exactly the same way. Man, of course, was intellectually superior to the animals possessing freedom of will having been made after the image and likeness of God - but this was not a matter of physical anatomy but of mental capability and delegated authority ('have dominion over ...'). In Genesis 1 the command to be 'fruitful and multiply' is applied to all 'kinds' including the human kind, and 'fill the earth' implies reproduction of species 'after their kind' - and if the world was not to be completely overrun by cockroaches or rabbits - or humans - this command implies death in the natural order as well.

I see Genesis 2-3 as a separate stage in the development of God's plan with homo sapiens. It is not a re-run of Genesis 1 but has primarily to do with the establishment of a relationship between God and the man whom God has created. The Genesis 2-3 record does not necessarily say at what point in relation to the Genesis 1 account Adam was created, and we need not therefore identify Adam with Genesis 1:26-27 in which homo sapiens in general (male and female) are in view. As Victor Pearce (Who was Adam?) has suggested Adam is not a primitive old stone age 'hunter/gatherer' but a new stone age man - a horticulturalist and keeper of domestic animals. The record says that 'the Lord God formed man (Adam) of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life' - but there is no reason to think that this 'man' was any different in his physical constitution from the mankind whose creation is described in Genesis 1 - i.e. Adam was also mortal ('liable to or subject to death') from the start, though his life-span was far greater than that of modern man (something to do with the tree of life or what?). The description of God 'forming man of the dust of the ground' ought not it seems to me to be taken in crude literality - it is most likely to be a poetic shorthand way of describing a creative method forged by the sequential creative processes outlined in Genesis 1. In fact, the whole point of the Adam account in Genesis 2-3 is to describe to us through the experiences of one man Adam (as suggested by the toledoth structure of Genesis) the way in which man was brought for the first time into covenant relationship with God. As it is at this point that law comes in; 'thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ...' Here then for the first time we have man under divine law.

Consider now the situation of two kinds of men (or women) - one without any relationship to God and the other in some kind of covenant relationship with God. The first is like the people Paul refers to in Ephesians 2:12 - they are 'separate from Christ' (or God), they are 'excluded from citizenship' (or any part in God's kingdom), they are 'foreigners to the covenants' (having no legal responsibility to God), because of which they are 'without hope and without God in the world'. Paul was obviously speaking of the pagan peoples of his own day. But surely such a position of alienation from God would be true of any 'person' before or after Adam who had no knowledge or relationship to God. (I realise the 'before Adam' bit is pure speculation, but I believe that even Doctor Thomas thought there may have been a pre-Adamic population of the earth, and certainly modern paleo-anthropologists do). What then would be the position of such a one before God? He would certainly be a sinner if judged according to the divine law - but he is ignorant of this law and outside its demands. In Romans 5:12 Paul says (in relation to the interval between Adam and the Law of Moses) that "sin is not taken into account where there is no law". By which I take it he means that a person without law cannot be condemned by the law - if he were, and condemnation resulted in penalty, then surely sin would be 'taken into account'. I take it also that condemnation is a matter of law breaking, and that guilt is a term which can only be sensibly used in relation to such infringement of law. It follows therefore (or so it seems to me) that the individual who is without law - sinner in divine eyes or not - cannot be described as guilty under law nor can he be described as condemned by law. Of course God can (and often did) deal with such unlawful 'outlaws' as was his divine prerogative - as for example he did in the case of the people of Noah's day, or the men of Sodom - though even in these cases he provided them with warnings in advance of judgement. This is the situation, it seems to me, that Paul covers when he writes in Romans 2:12 "All who sin apart from law will also perish without law, and those who sin under the law will be judged by the law". The distinction here is between those without law who for one reason or another (old age, accident, disease, natural calamity) will perish - pass off the scene without ever having had any contact with God - and those who stand under God's law, who are in covenant relation with him, and who will in the natural course of things as sinners, be judged by the law and condemned for their personal sin. Is this pressing a few phrases of Paul too far, or is it reasonable to draw such far reaching generalisations from what he has written? This line of argument does of course assume that natural death is not specifically a penalty for sin (though in some cases - like the sodomites - it can certainly be seen in that light), but is the end of a natural lifespan - this is the line I think you accept. For those under God's law, penalty for sin can in some cases be execution (inflicted death) as in the case of Korah and co. but in the ultimate, the penalty for sin under law is eternal death - the second death you could call it. And that's what we need saving from.

So, it seems to me that the concept of divine 'condemnation' can only logically apply to those who are in some form of covenant relation with God. I would not want to get into exactly what defines such a covenant, but this seems to be the principle involved. As far as Adam is concerned, he was 'mortal' in the commonly accepted sense of the word (liable or subject to death) from the point of his creation. But although he was potentially a dying creature before he was given God's law, he was not condemned by that law - obviously. After sinning, he was condemned, and the penalty - inflicted death - was to be carried out on the day he sinned. However, in the mercy and purpose of God this penalty was not executed because of the substitutionary offering of the animal (coats of skins - ultimately the death of Christ) in order that the rest of the human race could come into existence. However, and here is the important point, there is no doubt that Adam and all his children whether or not they were in a specific covenant relation with God, suffered the consequence (not the penalty) of Adam's sin by being born outside the paradise of God and without the fellowship of the covenant that Adam had enjoyed before sinning.

So in general, men are not guilty of Adam's sin, nor are they being punished for it by natural death (as you so often point out) but they do suffer the consequences of Adam's sin. And the most universal of these consequences is that all men and women are naturally separated from God from birth, alienated from him, not in any covenant relation - unless (as I suspect the offering of Cain and Able suggests) they knowingly enter into such a relationship. You would see this as a federal principle, but the problem with the term 'federal' is that (dictionary definitions again) the term is related to a legal contract - often spoken of as the 'covenant of works' God entered into with Adam. I'm not wholly convinced of this - it's not clear to me Biblically that all the children of Adam were automatically under the covenant that God made with Adam in the garden. That there is a 'family' connection of all men with Adam is clear - certainly at the genetic level, so that the term 'Adamic condemnation' as applied to mankind in general is mistaken because only those under law can be condemned by the law. And for one reason or another, most of mankind is not in any kind of covenant with God, and so, to describe their position as 'condemned' seems to me to be inappropriate. However, they are members of a single family, and can be considered to bear a family responsibility for their actions - mostly sinful. Jesus was the first member of a new 'family' and was therefore in a position legally and morally, to redeem the sons and daughters of Adam.

I'm afraid I have strayed rather a long way from the definition of 'mortal' but the process of salvation (the change of 'mortality' to 'immortality') requires that by baptism, men and women are first brought into covenant relationship with God, that their sins (past, present and future) may be forgiven by the grace of God which is given effect by the blood of the covenant.

As usual, I have been far too long-winded about all this, but I would be interested in whether you can see any flaw in the above logic. I'm sure you will. I better send this now, before I think of anything else.

Yours in Christ. Geoff Maycock.

**In response to Geoff Maycock I wrote a brief note as follows:**

Dear Geoff, Thank you for your email of the 3rd. I have read through it and it will take a little while before I can give it the attention it deserves. I agree that 'mortal' is an ambiguous term and can give rise to different understandings. I have felt for some time that I ought to see if I am able to clarify my own thoughts on the subject and will try to put pen to paper. And thank you for your research on this subject.

Regarding "The Untold Story", I cannot see how it is possible for Richard Pursell's to claim that Robert Roberts did not understand what Clause 8 says. How else can it be understood if it doesn't mean what it says?

With Love in Jesus. Russell.]

**In connection with the above I wrote as follows to the Oxford University Press Academic Division on the 8<sup>th</sup> December:**

Dear Sirs, I wonder if you could please help me clarify a matter regarding the original use and meaning of 'mortal', 'immortal' and 'mortalize'.

I have a book written in 1873 wherein the author claims that "mortal" means "destined to die through breach of law".

However, the argument has been put that corruptible is synonymous with mortal as suggested by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:53, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

My problem is that the word 'mortal' seems to be used very loosely today and the meaning clouded by ambiguity; while the term 'mortalize' is seldom if ever used and not properly understood, and while immortal is accepted as the opposite of mortal, can a person be neither mortal nor immortal? (Dr John Thomas, writing in 1849, claimed that Adam and Eve were neither mortal nor immortal until they transgressed God's commandment).

Am I correct in supposing these terms were originally used in regard to people only and not the rest of the animal world?

Also is 'immortal' reversible, by which I mean if a person is made immortal can he become mortal again? In theology, if one is made incorruptible he can never again become corruptible. Is there the same connection between mortal and immortal?

Does the term 'mortalize' demand that one is neither mortal nor immortal before being mortalized?

Am I correct in thinking 'mortal', 'immortal' and 'mortalize' are legal terms as distinct from corruptible which relates to the physical sphere?

I would be most grateful for your observations regard this subject and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly, Russell Gregory.

**I received the following letter supported by 18 pages of references:**

**From OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Dear Mr Gregory, Thank you for your letter of 8 December to the Oxford Word and Language Service.

At present both *mortal* and *mortalize* have been revised as part of our preparation for the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, whereas *immortal* remains unrevised.

The first recorded transitive use of *mortalize* refers hypothetically to an immortal Adam being mortalized and later quotations refer to an immortal soul being mortalized, as well as various gods. Therefore it is not necessarily the case that something has to be neither mortal or immortal before being mortalized. The word *mortalize* means 'to make mortal' and this encompasses many shades of meaning of the word *mortal*, depending on the particular user of the word; I am not sure that the word itself demands anything, rather the particular shade of meaning is determined by a specific writer in a specific context.

The same is true of *mortal* and *immortal*; the first recorded user of both words, in several senses, is Chaucer, and there is nothing to indicate a specific legal context; the same is also true of later quotations. The early examples all refer to humans or gods, rather than animals, although there is nothing in the words themselves to prevent them referring to animals.

You ask whether a person can be neither mortal or immortal. Speaking lexicographically the answer could be yes, as the following example shows:

2006 M. Costa in V. Burrus and C. Keller *Towards a Theology of Eros* 40  
'Diotoma [in Plato's *Symposium*] asserts, to Socrates's surprise, that Eros is neither mortal nor immortal, and thus neither a human nor a god.'

The same use of mortal and immortal appears in many translations of the Symposium. The following quotation, however, can be found in many translations of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, such as the following:

1812 T. Taylor tr. *Aristotle Works* I. 284 'The syllogism, therefore, is, that every D is either B or C. Hence it is necessary to assume, that man is either mortal or immortal.'

Similar examples and counter-examples can be found for many of your questions; therefore it may be more appropriate to consult a theologian about specific concepts or controversies attached to the words, rather than a lexicographer about the words themselves.

I enclose copies of the entries for all the words mentioned.

Yours sincerely, Eleanor Maier.  
Assistant Editor. Oxford English Dictionary.

#### **My personal observations as a result of the above:**

I wish, first of all, to say how much I enjoyed Brother Geoff Maycock's letter. I have studied it thoroughly and agree with everything he puts forward, except perhaps with some reservation with regard to whether or not mortal can or should be used as a legal term, though even here he has expressed his view well and I do not, of course, insist on my own view. However, I would like to put forward further evidence in support of my position.

We all know of course that 'mortal' is used and understood in many different ways and perhaps it can be said it is one of those words that means whatever the writer wishes it to mean. All I can hope to do is to show that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was considered, though not always, as a legal term.

Before dealing with our subject I would mention there is a definition of mortalize which I have never seen before. While I doubt if any of our readers would agree that once made immortal one can again be made mortal, yet this is how it is used in Roman Catholicism, for they say that an immortal being who offends God is mortalized by Him so that he can die! But that's Roman Catholicism for you!

In the last Circular Letter I said on page 15:

"The word 'mortal' is used in more than one sense. Strictly, I don't think Adam was in a mortal condition before the fall; he was in a corruptible condition, but not mortal. In older or more comprehensive dictionaries one can find the word 'mortalize' meaning 'to become mortal' or 'to make mortal'. It was transgression that placed Adam under sentence of violent death, a sentence of death which he did not suffer. This is when the first pair was made mortal, or subject to death per law."

I then went on to say that as we are no longer under the sentence of death we are no longer mortal. This idea seems to have raised a few eyebrows! So let me hasten to say that I have never known anyone of the Nazarene Fellowship put this in writing before, so please take this as my own deduction of what may be the case.

In the last C.L. Tony Cox asked in what sense is mortal a legal term and later, in response to my observations, Geoff Maycock wrote in the above letter,

“You obviously regard the distinction between mortal and corruptible as of some importance. However, it has always seemed to me that your definition of ‘mortal’ is not what most peoples intuitive understanding of the term is, and I see in the latest newsletter (No. 234) that others have a similar difficulty.”

It is true that no dictionary gives this definition in as many words, hence my letter to the Oxford University Press, Language Division for their observations and I have published their letter above. They also sent me 18 pages of references giving examples of how the words mortal, mortalize and immortal have been used over the years.

Using these sources leaves me with the understanding that mortal was considered a legal term along with the more general applications with which we are all familiar. I say this because Strong’s Concordance gives the definition of the Greek word θνητός ‘*thnetos*’ (mortal) as “liable to die”. Sadly, the word liable is today used in an ambiguous manner also but it can be shown that this has not always been the case, for in the publication “English Synonyms Antonyms and Prepositions – Standard Educational Series” (1914), we find this entry under the word ‘liable’:-

*LIABLE* signifies subject to some action or effect; hence liable refers to some legal obligation which may or may not come into exercise; one may be liable for the debts of another (who may, however, pay them himself); a person may be liable for damages (which no legal action may be taken to collect); because of this element of contingency, we do not say that a steward or agent is liable for the amount of his trust, but accountable, answerable, or responsible.

As this is written in the “Standard Educational Series” I think we can safely accept this was the usual understanding prior to 1914 when this book was written and surely applied for some time afterwards.

This is also supported by the Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001, Douglas Harper, which has this to say:

“liable – “bound or obliged by law,” from Anglo-Fr. liable, from O.Fr. lier “to bind,” from L. ligare “to bind, to tie” (see ligament). General sense of “exposed to” (something undesirable) is from 1593. Incorrect use for “likely” is attested from 1886. Liability “condition of being liable” is from 1794; meaning “thing for which one is liable” is first attested 1842.”

James Strong published his concordance in 1890 and he describes *thnetos* as meaning “liable to die”, in his view then this must have been a legal matter. Edward Turney wrote in “The Sacrifice of Christ” in 1873, on page 15, “The animals, we learn from Genesis sprang from the ground by Almighty power. They have all the same breath, all were of flesh, that is corruptible. You may call them “mortal” if you like, in a general or loose sense; but it is more strictly correct to style them “corruptible” because “mortal” means destined to die through breach of law. (Page 22 in the 1961 reprint). Dr Thomas wrote in 1849 “We may admit, therefore, the corruptibility, and consequent mortality of their nature, without saying they were mortal... in this sense, therefore, I say, that in their novitiate, Adam and his betrothed had a nature capable of corruption.”

I feel it is therefore for others to prove, if they can, the Greek term *thnetos* (“mortal”) is not used in the legal sense in the Scriptures.

Russell Gregory

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## Extracts from a Forum continued from previous Circular Letter, page 26:

**64 Russell:** Many good points have been made regarding “the sinless blood of Jesus” but the key factor I believe we should keep in mind is found in Leviticus 17:11 where we read, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.”

This confirms Kim's point in message 63. I can also empathize with Kim's feeling that "going to the trouble of thinking what this article says is just thinking too much about it." However, I do feel there can be a very satisfying outcome of greater knowledge and understanding by a prayerful consideration of these things which helps us appreciate just what Jesus has done for us through sheer determination and enormous courage in face of such adversity.

In message 1 the point was made "Whatever is in a human father's genetic make-up that makes him a partaker of Adam's sin nature was not involved in Jesus' formation." And in message 3, "And is there any scriptural backup for the idea that Jesus' blood was not contaminated by Adam's sin nature because of this?"

M.E.D. responded by using Hebrews 4:15, that Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." If this means anything it is surely telling us Jesus had no extra help in overcoming temptation than that which is available to each of us. We don't use the help offered; we don't request it when we need it most, but it is there for the asking. 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." That "way of escape" Jesus used.

I feel this really closes the matter because it shows that Jesus' being perfectly obedient to His Father's will had nothing to do with His blood (or His flesh). Again we are told in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is transgression of law." As sin has to do with law it is a legal matter and has nothing to do with our physical body ("a lump of meat" as Trevor expressed it), but it has everything to do with the mind. There has been a great amount of confusion caused by supposing sinful behaviour can change one's physical make-up. Of course we can damage our bodies by abusing them and we can fall sick from disease, but we are not talking about such matters here. When Adam and Eve sinned in Eden there is no evidence whatever of a change in their physical make-up. The Roman Catholic notion of Original Sin has been adopted by most churches in one form or another, but it is man's teaching; not scripture teaching.

So this brings us to the other point in message 1 - of whether or not Jesus was a "partaker of Adam's sin nature." What sin nature? There is no evidence that our nature is any different to that of Adam and Eve at their creation. They were made "very good" for the purpose for which God created them - and so are we today; it is for each of us to ask God into our lives - into our hearts and direct our paths.

In saying these things I am aware I may be on a collision course with some who have strong views to the contrary but I am sure these matters can be discussed in love so each may make up their own minds through prayerful study and thought.

**65 From Linda:** Thanks Russell for your post - and I agree - "matters can be discussed in love". There must have been some sort of change to Adam and Eve once they had sinned, though. Was it mental and spiritual change - e.g. sense of shame and spiritual separation from God? If so, this could have resulted in the body becoming sick, seeing the mind and body are so closely connected and impact on each other.

**67 From Russell:** Yes, I agree Linda. A guilty conscience can affect one's health. The mind and body are indeed closely connected. I have also read that when a person receives some bad news the heart reacts before the brain. Just how this can be measured I don't know, but it's supposed to have been proven somewhere. But the change for Adam was his relationship; no longer a son of God, he was now in bondage to Sin. However, I see no support for the notion that the physical bodies of Adam and Eve were changed from being "very good" to "very bad." And some believe that our bodies are so bad that it required the crucifixion of Jesus to show to mankind just how bad our bodies are and what they deserve. Ugh! It's worse than the Original Sin doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Neither do I see any sense in this view because only God could have made such a change from very good to very bad - and why should He do that? Adam and Eve sinned while they were in the "Very Good" state and it makes no sense to change it to very bad just because they transgressed His commandment.

Let's think of something 'nicer' for a moment. We have the commandment to love God with all our heart and soul and might (Leviticus 6:5). We may think this is the ultimate we can achieve, yet Jesus, just before

His crucifixion said, “A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). How was this new commandment?

**68 Drew:** Brother Russell and all, I love your strong opposition to original sin Russell. I also stand as far away from that as possible. I think we see almost exactly eye to eye on this. I just don't see sin as something being passed down or as being part of our bodies. I can't imagine sin particles in my blood. Two more points on this: 1) I think it gets rid of personal accountability in regards to sin. To say we just have sin in us in some physical way goes against what sin is to me. It is a decision to disobey God's rules--to Adam and Eve (don't eat of the tree)--law of conscience (what he wrote in us all)--Law of Moses--laws of Christ or rules to the church. By me breaking these rules I am guilty and subject to death. 2) If sin is passed down in blood: what do you do with someone who gets a blood transfusion? Must they ask forgiveness for all the disobedience of that person? Again I think we would be getting away from what sin really is there.

I do see the effects of sin as being passed down from Adam. Both as a precedent, and even possibly as a physical manifestation. I have heard Romans 5 used to show evidence of original sin etc. I have never seen it this way. I don't feel like typing or discussing all of it so I think the key verse is 12 (as I read from my NASB)

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned”. Just as lawyers look at landmark cases today in court, Adam set the standard for the hard and fast rule that sin is punishable by death. Notice closely that sin didn't pass to all but death as all have sinned. So I do see the effect spread to all - even babies at times. And it seems God must have changed Adam in some way. Whether it was through access to the tree or whatever have you, he was given a timeline for his body to break down from that point on. Whether it was a thousand years then, or more like about 120 now, all are born with this.

**69 Mark:** What then do you make of Linda's comment? (#66) – “There has to be a reason for God literally being Jesus' Father. If it didn't matter, then God could have chosen someone who had a human father and mother.”

**70 Steve:** Linda, I think the Messiah had to be the Son of God so that He could be God's “shaliach”, His agent. The parable of the tenants has this telling line: “I will send my son; they will respect my son”.

In either receiving or rejecting the Son we receive or reject God Who sent Him. I don't believe that the Son was different in any physical way from those He came to save. The only difference brought out by His miraculous birth of a virgin was the relationship of Father-Son that was established.

**71 Linda:** Hi Steve, I agree that Jesus wasn't different in any physical way from those He came to save and I also agree that being the only begotten son of God, the father/Son relationship was established in a special way. I also think though, that because Jesus was directly the Son of God and not the son of a human father, He was outside the “descendants of Adam, family” in the father's line. He came from a different line and could therefore make His own family. In this way we can pass from Adam's family into Jesus' family.

**72 Russell:** Dear Drew, Mark, Linda, Steve and Everyone, I agree with almost all you say Drew, but I think there are one or two things we can go into a little deeper. I agree with your points 1) and 2) and that the effects of Adam's sin have been passed down. But this needs explaining and I think Paul does this very well in his letter to the Romans. You also say that it was not sin that was passed down from Adam but death. This again needs qualifying and enlarging upon. But before I express my views on these I want to include a response to Mark's query regarding Linda's observation - “There has to be a reason for God being Jesus' Father” and add to Steve's comments. I see all these things closely tied in together.

Yes, there is a very good reason for God literally being Jesus' Father. First of all let us go back to Adam and Eve. They were told that if they transgressed God's commandment they would most certainly die. At first sight this might seem a severe punishment for such a simple error on the part of Adam and Eve, but God was perfect and He wanted Adam and Eve to be perfect too, and He would not allow a sinner to live for ever. However, God had a plan ready for when Adam and Eve transgressed, a plan which we learn more

about later in the Bible. But first we see Adam and Eve were under probation. The law was to give choice as one cannot have a choice to obey or disobey if there is no commandment in the first place.

Adam and Eve failed to keep the commandment and were about to die that very day. I do not believe natural death to be any sort of punishment. God meant what He said to Adam and Eve - but as we learn so many times later throughout the scriptures God is not willing that any should perish and He will save everyone who seeks repentance; who turn again to Him. Although we are not told Adam and Eve were repentant, but if we read the narrative in this light we can see they sought God's mercy. And I'm sure God did not want to end the human race in this way. God is very merciful, so He slew an animal (most likely a lamb) instead. When Adam and Eve saw the shed blood they would surely realise that the death of the animal was the death they deserved but didn't receive. This sacrifice provided Adam and Eve with a covering of their shame - which was both the realisation they were naked before God, as well as the shame which their guilty consciences gave them. But we know that animal sacrifices could not take away sin. Before the New Testament - the new covenant in Jesus - all the sacrifices for sin covered over sin but did not take it away.

Then we read in Genesis that God would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head (fatal) and the seed of the serpent was to bruise his heel (temporary). The bruising of the head and the bruising of the heel were both accomplished when Jesus was crucified. The bruising of the heel was the crucifixion; it was the worst the serpent could do, but it could not hold Jesus in death because it was a 'putting to death' which Jesus had not earned.

The fatal bruising of the serpent's head was Jesus' achievement in which, by His voluntary death, He ended the law of sin and death for those who accept Him as their Saviour. I hope to make this clear as we go on.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans provides further explanation. In Romans 5:18,19, we read "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..." This tells us we are (or were) under condemnation. Paul personifies Sin as a Master to whom we belong; Romans 6:16, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" We were sold to Sin by Adam. This is a legal position by which we find ourselves "concluded under sin" (Galatians 3:22), under the condemnation of the law of sin and death. Now this is not a bad thing but a good thing for it does not mean we are born sinners or that there need be a curse in the law against us. Paul further explains that God has concluded all under sin for the purpose of blessing those who will accept Jesus as their Redeemer, "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Again in Romans 11:32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." And Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..." i.e. for those baptised into His death.

From these things I see that the change regarding Adam was in the relationship he had with God, his Creator. Once he transgressed he was no longer considered a son but a servant in bondage to sin. He had sold himself to sin (personified as his master). Adam expected his life to be ended "in the day" he transgressed but instead a lamb was slain to allow him to live out his natural life span. I see that all the descendants of Adam are/were in bondage to sin, concluded under sin and under condemnation. Under such a system no man can save his brother just as no slave to sin can free a fellow slave - Psalm 49:7, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Jesus was in a different position to the rest of the human race for He was not a son of Adam though related to the human race through His mother Mary. He did not receive His life from Mary but direct from His Father. It was Jesus natural life that He sacrificed for Adam to replace the symbolic life of that first lamb which could not take away sin but only covered it over till Jesus came. (See Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:15). Jesus was the Lamb of God sacrificed "to take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This sacrifice of Jesus natural life was in place of Adam's natural life. Thus Jesus purchased the human race for Himself. 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Ye are not your own for ye were bought with a price..." Jesus lost His natural life in the blood that was shed on Calvary and this He did not receive back again. He rose with spirit life.

And here we have the reason why Jesus was not a Son of Adam but had His life direct from the source of all life. Jesus was the Son of God, begotten of God and not of man. As Linda says, we must pass from Adam's family into Jesus family and this is done at baptism when we are born again - born into a new family. We come out of Adam by baptism into the death of Jesus in order to belong to Him and of His family.

**73 MED:** Russell, Thorough answer and thoughts. It will take a while to go through all you have here and follow the Scripture trail.

**74 Bruce:** Linda you say: "I also agree that being the only begotten son of God, the father/son relationship was established in a special way." Comment: I prefer to see Jesus as the uniquely begotten son of God, uniquely created in the womb of Mary and as a result a son of God, even as Adam specially created was a son of God. And we, when we become special creations in the lord Jesus become sons of God, by and through the self same spirit that created the lord Jesus in the womb of Mary. Jesus is not the only son of God, because if he were we could not become sons of God and Adam could not have been correctly called a son of God. Every time I hear that Jesus is the only begotten son of God, I get a little unsettled because it leaves out all those who are destined to become sons of God, does it not?

**75 Mark:** Bruce, The scriptures make a distinction between us being sons of God and Jesus being the only BEGOTTEN son of God. It doesn't denigrate our position but shows the uniqueness of Jesus.

**76 Russell:** Dear All, In message #72 I dealt with the views held by the Nazarene Fellowship. There is nothing new here, of course, for it all stems from history and we have only to go back to Dr Thomas who earnestly sought the truth of the scriptures. It is well known that he changed his mind over the years - about which he said "Must a man never progress? If he discovers an error in his premises, must he forever hold it for the sake of consistency? May such a calamity never befall me - rather let me change every day, till I get it right as last."

It was from this point that Edward Turney, a close friend of Dr Thomas, considered Dr Thomas' teachings and began to rationalise them with the help of others. The result at that time was Edward Turney's article "The Sacrifice of Christ".

Since then The Nazarene Fellowship have made very few changes to his understanding but have endeavoured to express them in different ways in answer to Christadelphian opposition.

There is one change however, which I think ought to be noted. When writing "The Sacrifice of Christ" Edward Turney believed, along with the rest of Christendom, that natural death was the punishment for Adam's transgression. About two years later he realised this was not the case and pointed out that Adam was due to be put to death in the day of his transgression and this was not carried out, but a lamb was slain to provide a temporary covering till Jesus took away his sin.

The initial question in this thread concerned whether or not Jesus blood was any different to others and I think it has been shown that new blood is developed in the foetus and given life from the father. In the case of Jesus, He was given life direct from the Source of all life, His Father being God. Adam's life was also given him by God but the life in his blood was forfeited to "Sin" as Paul tells us. The miraculous begetting of Jesus placed Him in the strong position of being able to save others for He was not in bondage like Adam and his descendants. As Linda said in message 16 - "slaves can't redeem slaves."

Regarding message 74 from Bruce, I do not see any difficulty here, Bruce. You wrote, "Every time I hear that Jesus is the only begotten son of God, I get a little unsettled because it leaves out all those who are destined to become sons of God, does it not?" But Scripture tells us Jesus is the only begotten Son of God in John 1:14, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (Again in verse 18 and John 3:16 etc.). We can become sons of God by adoption. No one else has been begotten of God in the same way as Jesus, nor for the same reason, and so I think you may have in mind 1 John 1:5 where we read, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." May we all be blessed with that grace and honour.

**78 Kim:** I am having a hard time with this. On one hand I can see how sin is something we choose to do in our life. On the other hand I can see how sometimes we find that we've done something we didn't actually set out to do to find we've sinned. I'm thinking if we are not born to someday sin against God, then why does the Bible tell us that everyone is a sinner? There is a verse that says: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8. That verse is telling me that no matter what I choose, I cannot be without sin. What does it tell you all?

**79 Kim:** For God so loved the world that He gave HIS ONLY begotten son! That's the difference. God's seed, God's offspring. Jesus is the EXACT image of His father.

**80 Mark:** Kim, Paul had the same problem as all of us have. The good that he wanted to do he couldn't do and the evil he didn't want to do, he did. Romans 7:14- 24, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"

The answer to the question in verse 24 is given in chapter 8 - walking by the spirit!

**82 Russell:** Dear Mark, There is some difficulty in using Romans 7:14-24 in this way. We have to reconcile all these sayings of Paul with his other declarations, e.g. "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" - 1 Corinthians 9:27. "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" - 1 Thessalonians 2:10. "Thus say I then, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" - Galatians 5:16. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" - 1 Corinthians 11:1. "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" - Romans 12:1.

In Romans 7:5 Paul refers to the time "when we were in the flesh" and I believe from verse 14 onwards of this chapter refers to this time. In the next chapter at verses 8 & 9 Paul says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh." It is important to understand what Paul means when using such terms for it is quite obvious he and they to whom he wrote were still physically in flesh and blood bodies. Paul must have been using these terms in a doctrinal sense.

At the end of chapter 7 Paul thanks God that he has been delivered from his previous state when he was 'in the flesh', by Jesus for he is now 'in Jesus' and verses 1 and 2 of the next chapter (Romans 8) read, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Then finally Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"

We may well ask why the translators used the present tense in Romans 7:14-24 when in fact it was written in the aorist tense. I have never seen a satisfactory answer to this but many commentators disagree with the modern use of these verses and it seems most probable that they were not so used before Rome took over the church. Dr Adam Clarke has this to say about Romans 7:14-24, "It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the church, or prevailed there, that the apostle speaks here of his regenerate state; and that what was, in such a state, true of himself, must be true of all others in the same state. The opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character. It requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of the epistle, to see that the apostle is here either personating a Jew, under the Law and without the Gospel, or showing what his own state was...without Christ."

But I do feel it is most important to follow Paul's line of argument throughout as one consistent whole.

**83 Russell:** Dear Kim, Yes, we do sin so easily. That's why we need constant exhortation to be ever watchful. But we have never been given a commandment which we cannot keep and so I'm sure every sin we commit is our own fault. Should we find we have done something wrong unintentionally, I don't see how that can be considered sin but perhaps someone will have other thoughts on this. One thing we can be sure of is that God understands us and knows the thoughts of our hearts.

God will never let us be tempted above what we are able to withstand and overcome. See how we admire and look up to those wonderful people listed in Hebrews 11 and others like them throughout the Scriptures. If we draw close to God He will draw close to us. We need never sin again! But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9).

Hebrews 13:20, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

**84 Fulfilled:** Russell, you write - Post 76. "About 2 years later he ( Edward Turney) realised this was not the case and pointed out that Adam was due to be put to death in the day of his transgression". This was not just a thinking that Edward Turney came up with, other Christadelphians who had been with Dr Thomas also had this belief, i.e. - J.J. Andrew. The Doctor himself had written that natural death was part of creation not the punishment in 'Herald of the Kingdom' July 1855. vol. 5. page 159. (Taken from Post on the Berean Christadelphian Forum)