

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter

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Editorial

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters, Loving Greetings in Jesus Name,

2020! What a year! All the nations of the world involved in the coronavirus pandemic. A year of troubles, distress, anxiety, sorrow and pain, While it is true there have been serious pandemics throughout history, this Coronavirus pandemic has seen perhaps the greatest disruption to daily life in communities around the world. Restrictions in travel globally and locally have affected all. Loss of work with businesses closed and/or bankrupt; schools and other places of education closed, families confined to home resulting in some cases of family quarrels and violence. Without the diligence of all health and medical workers the loss of life would have surely been much greater

In this regard we have seen those who have risen to the occasion and have done and continuing to do an excellent work in whatever way has been required serving their fellow man with resolute loving kindness, happily giving of themselves by doing all in their power to the point of exhaustion, alleviating pain and suffering; together with being good neighbours making sure all in the community have sufficient for their needs day by day.

The question now being asked by many is whether or not the world has changed for ever, or will life as we used to know it be eventually restored? Time alone will tell.

While we have all been so concerned about our day to day problems we may not have noticed just how much the nations of the world have aligned themselves into larger groups which are growing more aggressive towards each other. The competition to become the strongest group of nations with the most sophisticated weapons has been the foremost thought in the minds of national leaders. War-mongering due to mistrust and hate has led to threatening one another and each preparing for war, while some smaller counties are already under attack and suffering loss, yet little is reported.

For Christians the question being asked is, are we approaching the time foretold by Daniel in chapter 12 and verse 1 were we read “and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time...” It is a time of trouble that has been promised, and it comes before we can have the promised time of peace - world-wide - which everyone longs for but can never achieve by fighting.

Daniel was a prophet to whom God had promised the time would come for Israel to be a nation at peace having been delivered from all its troubles; and never has there been a nation that has suffered so much and survived persecutions for so long, and even today there are many peoples who want to see Israel wiped off the face of the earth. They will not succeed but will them-selves be destroyed.

Isaiah was another prophet who also foretold these things. Isaiah 45:18 to 25, (from The New American Standard Version). "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens - He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited - I am the LORD, and there is none else. "I have not spoken in secret, in some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, Seek Me in a waste place; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, declaring things that are upright. Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; . . ."

"Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*. They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory." Jesus Christ testified of all these things and has promised great blessing at His coming. Even so, Come Lord Jesus.

With Love in Jesus Christ to all our readers, Russell

Ruth and Naomi

LOVE IN ADVERSITY.

"Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land of Israel." It is because of that famine, there has been recorded a story of love and devotion that still grips the imagination centuries after the events occurred. Few Old Testament stories have been so often repeated as the story of Ruth, the Moabitess who became "an Israelite indeed," - the Gentile maiden who was destined to become an ancestress of our Lord - and yet the brief, simple story seems more, beautiful every time it is studied. The amazing thing about the story is, that the part remembered most vividly is not the love story of Ruth and Boaz, but the unselfish devotion of a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law. In Western countries, it is quite common to find a bond of love and real sympathy between a man's wife and his mother, but in the East, such feelings must have been rare indeed. A man's mother ruled most arbitrarily over the domestic affairs of his life, and his wife took it as a matter of course that this was right. She accepted a most menial position in the home which she shared with her husband's family. She was expected to obey her mother-in-law in everything and often the lowliest tasks were her portion. So the beautiful story of Ruth and Naomi is all the more striking, because the relationship between the two was so exceptional, and reflects so well on the natures of both Ruth and Naomi.

The first five verses of the book of Ruth form a very brief introduction to the main story; just sufficient is told to explain how and why Ruth and Naomi are brought into contact with each other. There was a famine in the land. We are not told how long the famine had lasted, nor for how many years the "early and latter rains" had failed; but Elimelech's heart was heavy with the fear of starvation facing his loved wife and two sons, and he decided to leave the land in Bethlehem which was given to him when the country was divided among the tribes, and go into the land of Moab. It was not a long journey as we think of journeys to-day, but in those days of slow travel, it must have seemed quite a formidable distance. At this time, it is likely that some sort of friendliness existed between the Moabites and the Israelites; at any rate, the small family seem to have lived quite securely in the land of Moab, until Naomi experienced the first great sorrow - the death of her husband, Elimelech. Mahlon and Chilion, her two sons, then married two Moabite girls, and happiness seemed once more assured. But again disaster befell them. Mahlon and Chilion both died - possibly they were struck down by an epidemic - and the three women were left widows.

Perhaps their common sorrow bound them together, but Naomi must have had a character which inspired a deep love in both Ruth and Orpah, and Naomi seems to have loved them dearly in return. When Naomi made up her mind to go back to Bethlehem (for she had heard that "the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread," and she yearned to be among her own countrymen once more), Ruth and Orpah started back with her. Soon, however, Naomi begged them to go back to their own homes. She blessed them, and prayed that God would deal as kindly with them as they had dealt with her and the dead. This prayer gives a glimpse of the relationship that existed between the three. Naomi went on to wish them peace and happiness in the new family life which she hoped they would find. Then she kissed them farewell, and for a time Ruth and Orpah were unable to speak as they all wept together, until they seemed suddenly to make up their minds that, come what might, they would not leave their kindly, lonely, mother-in-law, and they told her so. Naomi was insistent. She had no more sons with whom they could find happiness, and she would not dream of taking them away from the chance of future marriages - she told them how sorry she was that through her family such tragedy had entered their young lives - "It grieveth me much *for your sakes* that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me." Orpah was persuaded that her best course was to return to her people, but Ruth's love stood the test of all the trouble and adversity that had befallen them, and she refused to leave Naomi. When Naomi for the last time tried to persuade her to follow Orpah, she replied with words that have echoed down through the ages as an example of the unselfish, loving devotion of one woman to another, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." The simple, beautiful language touches the reader deeply, but what must Naomi have felt? She argued no more; she knew that Ruth's mind was irrevocably made up. Not only did Ruth declare that Naomi's home and people should be hers, but most important of all, she accepted Naomi's God. She was willing to become an Israelite, and live under the law of Moses - she had learned of the wonderful God who had led the Israelites out of the land of bondage into the land of Canaan, and she knew how little chance of serving Him would she find among the Moabites, who worshipped the god Chemosh, practicing a horrible ritual in their worship. Small wonder that the God of Israel seemed a haven of peace to her, and this, coupled with her deep love for Naomi, made her willing to leave her own people for ever, and face bravely whatever the future might hold. Hers is an example of faith which is most inspiring to those who, like her, have taken the God of Israel for their God, and have chosen his people to be their people.

We are not given details of the long walk taken by the two lonely women, but the God in whom they trusted was with them to protect them, and "they two went until they came to Bethlehem." The neighbours came to meet them. Ten years had passed since Naomi had gone from their midst, and sorrow had aged her; in wonder they exclaimed "Is this Naomi?" One wonders if Ruth were a little hurt when Naomi replied "Call me not Naomi; call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty...." After all, Naomi was not quite empty. Ruth was with her - had left country and family to be with her - but the momentary bitterness that overwhelmed Naomi as she compared her home-coming with her departure ten years earlier, was quite understandable and Ruth would doubtless appreciate this to the full.

Naomi and Ruth had reached Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest, about the end of May. Naomi had the land which had belonged to Elimelech, but Ruth felt that she must do something to help them find a living, and so begins the second part of the story - the love story of Ruth and Boaz, which brought the young widow such a rich reward for her faith in God and for all her goodness to Naomi.

Ruth dutifully begged Naomi's permission to go gleaning - they must have bread, and their own land would not yield a harvest for months. So they took advantage of the law which God gave Moses, providing that the farmers in their plenty must allow their poorer neighbours to glean corn in their fields at harvest time. Ruth started out, shy and diffident among strangers. Surely God guided her

footsteps, for of all the fields which she might have chosen, she asked permission of the foreman to glean in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy relation of Elimelech's, although she had no idea to whom the fields belonged.

Boaz visited the field during the day, and noticed Ruth immediately. When he found out who she was, he was most kind to her. He told her that she was not to go to glean in any other farmer's fields; and that he would warn his men servants not to indulge in any undue familiarity with her. If she were thirsty, she was to help herself to the weak wine always provided as a drink in the harvest field. Ruth was overcome with gratitude, and making a deep obeisance she ventured to ask why Boaz thus singled her out from the other women gleaners "Seeing I am a stranger." And Boaz told her that he had heard about her loving-kindness to her mother-in-law, about her self-sacrifice in leaving all her own people to live among strangers, and he prayed that the God of Israel would reward her. He recognised the faith which Ruth had in God. ("Under whose wings thou art come to trust") and she must have been very much moved by this recognition of her devotion to Naomi. She replied "Let me now find favour in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-maid, though I be not like unto one of thy hand-maidens." Then Boaz told her to come at meal times and eat with his servants; and when she shyly joined the group as they left off work to take a meal, he himself handed her the usual parched corn and bread to dip into the weak wine.

When work recommenced, he told the reapers to allow her to keep quite close to them, and they were purposely to drop corn for her. For the rest of that day, we may be certain that Ruth worked happily, her thoughts full of Boaz; she would tell herself that there was no special significance in his kindness to her, but all the time her heart would tell a different story, and she would dwell on each word and look he had given her. When evening came, and the busy day was over, she went back to Naomi with the extraordinary amount of grain she had gleaned and beaten out of the ears of corn. There was so much that Naomi knew it was impossible for Ruth to have gleaned it all in the normal way, and in answer to her questions, the whole story came out. Naomi was very excited. She prayed God to bless Boaz for his goodness "to the living and to the dead"; and she told Ruth that she must be most careful to obey Boaz and glean only in his fields. So day by day, Ruth went into the harvest fields, happy and contented, while at home, Naomi waited and planned to further the happiness of her beloved daughter-in-law.

Harvest ended, and threshing began. It would seem that it was the custom for the farmer to sleep in the barn where the threshing took place, maybe to guard the grain from thieves until it was safely stored away. Whatever the reason, Naomi knew that Boaz would spend the night on the threshing floor, and she determined to put into practice her plans for a happy marriage for Ruth. These plans seem very strange to our modern Western ideas; Ruth however, obeyed implicitly. Naomi told her to dress herself carefully, go to the threshing floor, wait for Boaz to fall asleep, and then lie down at his feet. Ruth did all this, and when at midnight Boaz discovered that she was there, she claimed kinship with him. Boaz most willingly promised that he would fulfil a kinsman's duty to her, and take her for his wife, but told her that there was one of closer relationship than he, and this other kinsman must be approached first. He told her that he himself would act for Naomi, and find out the other man's intentions. Careful of the good name which Ruth bore, he sent her away before the dawn, so that no one should see her, first giving her a quantity of corn to carry home to Naomi. Back at home, the two women waited anxiously to see what the outcome of it all would be.

In the 4th chapter of Ruth, we have the account of the measures taken by Boaz to ensure that his marriage with Ruth cannot ever be called in question. In the city gate, before the elders and people gathered together, Elimelech's nearer kinsman publicly announced his refusal to marry Ruth "lest I mar mine own inheritance," so Boaz called upon the listeners to witness that he took on the duties of the next of kin. He was willing in his love for Ruth that their first born son should not be reckoned his own according to the customary law, but the son of Mahlon, who would inherit Elimelech's portion in the land, and so preserve Elimelech's name.

It says much for the character of Boaz that he was thus willing, for he was an important, rich man; but for Ruth's sake he consented "to mar his own inheritance." It was a big sacrifice on his part.

Ruth and Boaz were married, and Ruth found a rich reward for her faith in God and for her unselfish care for Naomi. In the birth of their first born son, Naomi, too, knew a happiness she little thought she would ever experience when she lost husband and sons. The neighbours remembered her bitter cry "The Lord hath brought me home again empty," and they told her that her grandson should comfort her old age "for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee and is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him."

But none of the persons in the story knew that Ruth, the Moabitess, would go down in history as the ancestress of David, and also of "Great David's greater son," or that it would be the name of Boaz that would be coupled with hers in the genealogy, though legally the baby Obed was counted as the son of Mahlon. "And Boaz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David" - and so down through the generations, until "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." So in the Kingdom of God, when Ruth realises to the full the part she played in His plan, she will feel that the prayer of Boaz, made at their first meeting, has been bountifully answered - "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Sister Laura Caudery

"Born Again"

John 3:3

Some find difficulty in reconciling the plain statements of Scripture pointing to the fact that true believers have Eternal Life as a present possession, e.g. John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47, 1 John 3:15, 5:11, 5:15, 5:20, but others which declare it to be a future attainment, this seeming inconsistency can be best comprehended by allowing the natural order of the birth process to enlighten us to that which is spiritual.

In John 3:3 Jesus tells Nicodemus that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God;" this is usually taken to mean belief and baptism, but a closer look at the following verse "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" suggests literality of the latter as it is of the former, we do know that baptism in water - preceded by an understanding and belief of the Atonement - as well as a change of nature are necessary before any can inherit the Kingdom of God seeing that flesh and blood cannot do so, it would seem then that in verse 3 Jesus is speaking of a beginning and ending of a birth process and inasmuch as in the natural order we have no power to bring about our own begetting so it is in the spiritual order. James 1:18 reads "of His (God's) own will begat He us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures". Christ Himself became the First-fruit or, "First Born from the dead," Revelation 1:5, having first been "born of the flesh" (of Mary) though literally begotten by the Holy Spirit and so of God; though He has many Spiritually begotten children. 1 Peter 1:3-5 and verse 23, the word here translated 'born' in the A.V is 'begotten' in the Greek - (see "The Emphatic Diaglott" as in other references where conversion is alluded to, i.e. John 1:13 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 5:4, 5:18), whereas when actual birth is alluded to i.e. John 3:3-5, 3:7, 3:8, the word is properly translated born, (the A.V. is misleading here as it is in some other Scriptures). The period of gestation in the natural order which is a time of development of the new life as yet hidden in the womb but bringing hope and expectation that in the fullness of time a normal human being will come forth, so we may see a counterpart of that which is Spiritual if the Seed-Word re Christ be planted in "good ground" it will develop as we grow in grace and knowledge as comprehended in such

expressions as “Christ in you” as a hope of Glory; “the hidden man of the heart”, the “inward man”, “We have the mind of Christ” i.e. a mind that understands Christ. “Christ dwells in our hearts by faith” etc.

Our probation is a time of trial and testing, chastisement for our good, but if we have the true faith and keep it to the end our Spirit birth is sure, and just as the unborn foetus in the womb is the child of its parents in the natural order, so believers are now children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The believer is now during this probationary period working out his own salvation by keeping faith in Him whatever opposition or trial he may have to face, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” who for the joy set before Him - of bringing many sons unto glory - endured the Cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of God as High Priest and mediator on behalf of the saints in the forgiveness of their sins repented of... to purify a people for Himself zealous of good works... those of proving our faith as exemplified in Abraham’s offering up of Isaac (James 2:21-24), thus signifying his belief that God would provide Himself a Lamb, as Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad”, and also the good works of loving ones neighbour as oneself as seen in James 2:1-20 the whole briefly comprehended in loving God first and neighbour as self, these works extending into the future as the Bride of Christ, an helpmeet, (or fit) for Him in His future work of government of the World.

It is evident as John records in chapter 12 verses 23 and 24, that Jesus could have been glorified without dying (just as those Saints will be who are alive at His coming) but He would have been ‘alone’ as Adam, the type, would have been without ‘an help.’ He therefore became that “grain of wheat” who willingly lay down His life in order to bring forth much fruit - the “many sons” to Eternal Life.

God had declared regarding Adam that “it was not good for man to dwell alone”, the N.T. reveals him to be a type of Christ, so we can see and likeness between Christ’s death and the “deep sleep” required for the creation of a bride for Adam, which must have caused some loss of blood from his side, for we read that God “closed up the flesh instead thereof”, indicating that there was a literal severing of the flesh for the extraction of a rib, so with the antitype Christ “the second Adam,” whose side was literally pierced and His life-blood shed to make it possible for His Spiritual Bride (the Church) to be formed.

But to return to John 3. In answer to Nicodemus’ question “How can these things be?” I.e. in what way can man be born when he is old and “from above” etc.? Jesus predicted that it would be made possible through the Cross, revealing the incident in Numbers 21:9 of Moses “lifting up” the brass image of a serpent in the wilderness that the sinners of Israel may look thereon in faith and be healed and live as a “type of Himself bearing the Judgment due to Adam and his seed. He Himself being “Seed of the woman.” Holy from birth, harmless and undefiled, separate (by Spirit begettal) from sinners (in Adam), not being begotten by the will of the flesh but by the will of God. He was free-born and unblemished in every way until “lifted up” on the Cross where the Sin of the world was laid upon Him and He suffered the death (judicial) due to sinners. “He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace (with God) was upon Him, with His stripes we are healed... Isaiah 55.

How sad therefore it is to see this great act of self-sacrificing love explained in such terms as “a Renunciation of His body prone by nature to sin” and “He had to submit to a ceremonial condemnation of His nature”; “A cutting off of fleshly desires” etc. Human nature was never condemned, but sin which is transgression of God's law. Compare the ‘Image’ of Numbers 21:9 with the ‘Likeness’ of Romans 8:5, “for what the law could not do in that it (the law) was weak through the flesh (being legally dead in Adamic bondage) God did, by sending His own Son, (flesh belonging to God) in the likeness of Sin's flesh (flesh belonging to Sin) - the slave owner and for or by an offering for sin condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh,

Jesus came in flesh that He might taste death (judicial) for every man, thus rendering powerless the 'devil' or Sin (personified as a slave owner) by Himself suffering the death due to sinners He set them free (Hebrews 2:14-18). Compare also with 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He (God) hath made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin (or sin-offering) for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" And if we are truly "In Christ" by belief and obedience, His righteousness is imputed to us as Adam's sin was imputed to us when we learned by enlightenment of our own estranged position from God on account of being in Adam's loins when he sinned. We must therefore, in the symbol of baptism, "die unto Sin", which Christ did literally for us, rising from the water to a newness of life - a new creation of God, those 'born out of water' are pictured as new-born babes growing up into spiritual adulthood (in this life) but the Spirit Birth (incorruptibility) still awaits Christ's coming for the Faithful, who will meet Him "in the air" those who sleep to "awake in His likeness" and the living "changed" in a moment "in the twinkling of an eye."

Sister Evelyn Linggood

"The Kingdom and The Parables"

Part Two of Three

As I have intimated, we are not to expect in the story represented, exact conformity with every feature of the parable as to time and circumstance. And while, as to the time of sowing the tares, the kingdom may not shew the same relation with the time of sowing the wheat, as we might expect from the parable, we must bear in mind that this feature is not contained in our Lord's explanation. Yet it is remarkable that at the close of the Millennium, the agency by which wickedness is introduced into the world is identical with the agency by which the tares are sown in the parable. "The enemy that sowed them is the devil," is our Lord's explanation. John says, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations," etc. Their end is also the same; "Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." "They shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them out into a furnace of fire. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." It is generally allowed by all who hold the personal reign of Christ on the earth, that the thousand years is but the preliminary stage of the Kingdom of God, seeing it is only at the close of that period that all things are subjected to the Divine rule. Besides the destruction of the deceived and rebellious nations referred to as taking place at the close of that period, there is also a time of judicial assize, when "they are judged every man according to his works." Revelation 20:11-15. It is then only that the righteous are finally freed from all mixture with evil, and "shine forth in the Kingdom of God their Father;" that Kingdom being then delivered over to its primary owner, by Him who has "put down all rule and all authority and power, having reigned till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

I submit that upon the whole this parable of the tares fits at least as well the millennial period, as it has ever been shown to do the present dispensation. The parable of the mustard seed, like the remaining parables in Matthew xiii., is left without an explanation. But Mr. Newton, taking the first parable (that of the sower) to "fix a character to the whole period;" applies it to the present dispensation. He says, "In the fourth century, the Empire of Rome and the Church united." . . . It was no wonder that, under such circumstances, the Church should become great in the earth . . . Though little as the mustard-seed once, it had grown, and become a tree." He admits, however, that that greatness "is a sorrowful fact," and that it is equally plain that that greatness was neither held nor exercised according to God. Intoxicated by their exaltation, they began to speak and to write as if the millennium were already come; and appropriated to themselves, not only the national blessings of Israel, but even the descriptions of the New Jerusalem."

Without an authorised explanation, it is very evident that growth is the one thing taught by this parable. Some have even found a meaning in “the fowls of the air lodging in the branches” of the tree, but there is no ground for this farther than shewing the size of the tree.

Now it is quite true that an institution called the church has grown to considerable dimensions, or, rather a number of institutions claiming that name. And it might be suggested here that this hardly suits the parable which speaks of only one tree. But is there any one of those institutions, at least those of large size, which corresponds with the church established by our Lord and His apostles. Has “the Word of the Kingdom” any place in such so-called churches? And if not, how can the parable of the sower which illustrates the effect produced by the Word of the Kingdom, “fix a character upon the whole period?” The apostles preached “the things concerning the Kingdom of God” for at least thirty years after our Lord’s ascension. Even in Rome itself, about A. D. 62, Paul “dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” Before this time, Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in which he said, “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” And can it be allowed that the church of Rome of the first century, as the grain of mustard seed, is to be found in its grown up counterpart in that institution which owns the supremacy of Mastai Ferreti called Pope Pius the Ninth? If not, how can it be said that the church under the name of “the kingdom of Heaven” has grown from “a mustard seed” to be “a great tree?”

But how does the millennial kingdom fit the parable? Is it predicted to grow from a small beginning to a great size? Let the Scriptures answer. “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called . . . the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and PEACE there shall be no end upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.” Mr. Newton will admit that this growth of Messiah’s “government and peace upon the throne of David,” has its beginning only from His second appearing, and therefore cannot object to this as an explanation of the parable.

Again, in Daniel ii. the image is destroyed by a sudden stroke inflicted by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. And it is only after the image is entirely destroyed that the stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. Verse 44 shows that the stone signifies the kingdom of God; and if the church is the kingdom here spoken of, as Mr. Newton contends, how does he explain the fact that so far from the church destroying the dominions represented by the image, the Roman Empire has virtually destroyed the church? But the image is destroyed by the stone before it begins to become a great mountain, and this cannot be applied to the church which has already grown to vast dimensions. The same truth is seen in the vision in Daniel vii. where “the Son of Man comes in the clouds of Heaven and receives dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him” - the Kingdom and dominion under the whole Heaven being given to the people of the Saints of the Most High. In the very nature of things this must be a process of subjugation implying growth and increase.

The parable of the mustard-seed is therefore amply verified in the Millennial Kingdom increasing from a small beginning to a world-wide sovereignty.

J. CAMERON.
To be concluded in the next C.L.

Veritas And His Friends.

“I believe, of course,” said Pietas, in a surprised tone, “that Christianity has historical foundations. I can hardly understand how anyone could deny this or overlook it who knew that Jesus had come in the flesh, and that his apostles preached the gospel in the world.”

“But,” said, Veritas, “that is only one point of contact between Christianity and history, whereas my remark was that the Bible throughout, as to the divine scheme which it unfolds, can be checked and proved by comparison with human affairs all along the line of the divine movement. Your school of speculation transfers the more serious part of God’s dealings with mankind to ‘another world’ - ‘a spirit world’ - your eyes and thoughts are ever directed thither, and so you fail to see what God is doing beneath your very nose, and how the Scriptures and history tally in a thousand things.”

“Well,” rejoined Pietas, “I certainly believe – most firmly believe that God’s great purpose with man is to prepare him for a better world; and all that relates to this world, of course, transcends history, though resting upon it.”

Mentor for some time during this conversation had been indicating a desire to break into it, which uneasiness was a thing very unusual for him. At last he said, “Depend upon it you are getting off the lines, when you make so much of historical confirmation of the Scriptures. I think it far safer to proceed, by discriminating between the reliable and the incredible in the Bible. History may support some things, but it won’t support all. I don’t go so far as Dubitas in thinking there is no actual inspiration from God traceable in the Scriptures, but I certainly should stop short of your position.”

“Perhaps so,” replied Veritas, “but I have not told you yet what my position is, beyond saying in a general way that I believe the Scriptures to be trustworthy. You must wait till you have heard a little more, and then perhaps you will be inclined to put more confidence in the Book than you do at present.” This was said in a very kindly, modest manner, and then, turning to Pietas, Veritas went on, “You speak of God mainly contemplating a ‘better world’ for man, by which I suppose you mean a ‘spirit world,’ as it is often termed.” “Yes,” responded his host.

“Well, that was the first thing that I began to doubt and to read the Scriptures upon, with the object of understanding what this ‘better world’ meant.” “I can’t understand,” cried Dubitas, “what people want to bother themselves about ‘another world’ for, as long as this is one too many for them, as it generally is. If they want a ‘better,’ why don’t they set about making this world better? Most people are like children who see nothing in the toy in their hands, but want the one in the closet upstairs.”

“Speaking for myself,” said Veritas, with a tone of dignity, “I tremble about another world - a phrase which, though you use it, you do not understand - because it has been made a matter of glorious promise to certain persons who will graduate for it, and then, I do not waste my time in trying to patch and mend up this world, because I believe it is a hopeless and - unnecessary business. New wine is best put in new bottles, as we have been told a good while ago. I was saying that I was led to doubt the popular teaching of the ‘better’ world. For analysed a little it is by no means a better but a much worse one, for although it supposes a heaven of endless enjoyment, it also affirms a hell of everlasting torment. And it was this latter feature of the ‘better world’ which struck me, as it has struck thousands besides me, as being impossible. I admit that I was led to examine the Scriptures on the subject because of this previous revolt of my reason, which refused to be satisfied with that idea of the universe in which sin and evil would remain an eternal flaw upon it.”

“Everlasting torment is absurd,” broke in Mentor. “I say the same,” said Veritas, “but I affirm more; I can say it is false as well; I mean Scripturally false. You have probably rejected the dogma, because your reason could not assent to it: I reject it because the Scriptures do not teach it.”

“Would you accept it if the Scriptures taught it?” asked Dubitas.

“As I can’t imagine the Scriptures teaching any irrational doctrine, your question needs no answer,” was the reply.

“Oh yes,” said Dubitas, “surely you can imagine the Scriptures teaching it, for as a matter of fact, very many people believe that the Scriptures do teach it.”

“Ah, I can imagine it written or printed, with the people you refer to, but I cannot conceive of Scriptures, which are the expression of divine wisdom and grace, teaching that God has made a world in which sin and evil would be permanent and eternally established facts, for ever set over against God’s power, which that power could never dislodge or change or subdue. Joseph Cook, the Boston lecturer, talks about character tending to permanence whether of good or evil, as though that proved anything. It is true that character does tend to permanence while the character lasts, but suppose the man destroyed in whom the character is resident, where is the permanence then? But let me go back to the ‘better world’ question.” “Yes,” said Pietas, “let us know what notions of this ‘better world’ you entertain. I confess to considerable haziness on the subject myself. It is too much like the moon in a mist.”

“I will try to do so, not only that you may perceive my position on this particular point, but that you may see how the historical argument for the Scriptures is augmented.”

“I learn from the Scriptures,” began Veritas, “that all that God is going to do for man he purposes to do in the EARTH, having ‘created it,’ as he says in Isaiah xlv. 18 (taking out his Bible) ‘not in vain, but having formed it to be inhabited’ and having ‘established it.’ It is not the earth that is the object of God’s displeasure, but sin in the earth, and it is not the world, but the fashion of the world, that is to pass away. 1 Cor. vii. 31. When God created all things, he pronounced the works of his hands ‘very good,’ and though afterwards the earth was cursed, the curse will, at a certain time, be removed, as you may read in Rev. xxii. 3, and in Rom. viii. 19-23.”

“I am afraid,” said Dubitas, “that you will place the Bible in more formidable conflict with science than the orthodox folks, who have a notion that some time or other man’s doings on this planet will be played out. How can you reconcile your view of an endless history for this planet with the fact that at some far distant period the sun’s fires will die down, and this earth become a mass of ice?”

“I don’t attempt to reconcile the Scriptures with scientific speculation,” was the reply; “I wait for the speculation to burst, and the next bubble after that, and so on. Believers have something better to do than attempt to annual ‘reconciliations’ immediately after the British Association has sat. The history of science has been a history of blunders, and we need have no more anxiety about the refrigeration than of the combustion of our planet. It is sufficient that in a very credible account of things - an account that can be tested in many ways - it is written that ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’ Is. xi. 9.”

“Do you believe,” enquired Dubitas, “that the present continents were once beneath the ocean, and that the ocean now covers what was once the dry land?” “Yes,” replied Veritas; “I believe that such changes have taken place in ages prior to man’s advent.”

“And do you believe that the same causes that have produced such vast changes are at work still?” “I do.” “Then may not the same results happen again, given a sufficient lapse of time?”

“Not necessarily,” observed Veritas, “for the Creator, if he choose, may set absolute bounds to the sea. Indeed, not only may he, but we can discern reason why he will; for mutation and change are connected with, and necessitated by the presence of sin and death, and when these are removed many of the mutations of things may cease. We are told that ‘the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;’ then what altered conditions may we not expect when creatures filled with perennial life have to be provided for?”

“Oh,” said Dubitas, “if you fall back upon possibilities in that way, I see how you can escape every difficulty alleged against your position.”

“I am not falling back on bare possibilities,” was the reply, “but on possibilities connected with certain statements as to what the Creator intends to do. This connection changes them into probabilities, does it not?”

Dubitas did not reply, but Mentor remarked - “I see no reason for demurring to your observation, if it could be satisfactorily shown that these intentions which seem to be expressed by the Creator, are really his expressions. But of that we must be sure before it can be granted that your possibility changes to a probability.

Brother J. Chamberlain (To be continued).

An Understanding of The Atonement

We ought always to look for common sense as we read the Bible and God has asked us to reason with Him so He is never going to put mysteries or superstitions in our way. Though we also read, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” (Proverbs 25:2). We can be sure that all the answers are there for our prayerful asking.

So let’s look at Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God placed them there and gave them a law – it was simple to keep but it came with the warning that if they failed the consequence would be very sever - “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” So right from the start we have the Law of Sin and Death. Strict yet quite clear, for it would not be right for God to give to Adam and Eve a law they couldn’t keep and then punish them for not keeping it. God doesn’t do things like that. God is Love. But the consequence in this case seems a bit drastic. They were to be put to death for eating a little fruit off the wrong tree !

But God never intended to put Adam and Eve to death and there is no record in scripture which tells us He did. After the first pair’s transgression, God slew an animal – or maybe two - from which He made them coats of the skins and allowed Adam and Eve to continue living. Their sin was passed over but the debt, or punishment, for breaking the law was not taken away or cancelled. That was the first sacrifice, and typical. Laws are legal matters instituted by God from the very beginning of His dealings with mankind; and ever since the whole of humanity has been run on legal systems; when the laws are man-made some are better than others; but God’s laws are all legal and moral.

Adam’s death at 930 years of age was the natural result of being created corruptible just like the rest of the animal kingdom - Ecclesiastes 3:19 & 20, “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all

one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”

Not only did God spare the lives of Adam and Eve, He also gave them the promise of someone who would come and “bruise the head of the serpent but would also receive a bruise to the His heel.” Students of the Bible soon learn this refers to Jesus Christ, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8).

Next I want to discuss the matter of substitution.

I see no way of taking the principle of substitution out of a purchase. In the simplest of terms, you go into a shop with your money, make your purchase and come away with your purchase instead of the money you paid for it. Substitution pure and simple.

In each of the eleven references below we have this situation, they all involve substitution:-

Matthew 13:45 & 46, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

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

Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Corinthians 6:20, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”,

1 Corinthians 7:23, “Ye are bought with a price”

Ephesians 1:13 & 14, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption (i.e. deliverance) of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 5:2, “hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

1 Peter 1:18,19, “forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

2 Peter 2:1. “But there were false prophets. . . , even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

Revelation 5:9. “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;”

Hebrews 9:13 & 14, “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who

through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Buying and selling is substitution but there are some who say this is too commercial to apply to the crucifixion. However, one alternative that is sometimes preferred is penal substitution but this makes Jesus Christ a "whipping boy" punished for the faults of others. This is so very wrong and an abomination. But freely giving one's life to save others is bravery to be applauded. John 12:24 - 26, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

When in my 20's I attended a Christadelphian conference in Huddersfield where A.D. Norris was the main speaker and I had the opportunity of asking him about Jesus dying for us or for Himself and he gave me the standard Christadelphian answer that "if Jesus died instead of us He should have stayed dead and we ought not to die." At that time I had no answer to this but was not satisfied because of quotations such as above. It was to be many years before I had proof of this Christadelphian error. But the view that Jesus died instead of us and that He did not have His life back again is truly the case. His life was in the blood that was shed while on the cross and this life He did not receive back again. He rose with *zoe* - spirit life.

In Isaiah 53:11 & 12, we read, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Indeed I would say if any view of the Atonement does not agree entirely with Isaiah 53 then there is something wrong.

Next I wish to quote from Dr Edersheim's book "The Temple at the Time of Christ", chapter six – here is just a part of one paragraph –

"As the Old Testament and Jewish tradition taught that the object of a sacrifice was its substitution for the offender, so Scripture and the Jewish fathers also teach that the substitute to whom all these types pointed was none other than the Messiah."

We must never lose sight of the fact that Jesus' Crucifixion was a Sacrifice. Some views expressed make His death to be a martyrdom. But we read "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:" 1 Corinthians 5:7, also "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." Hebrews 10:10. Jesus was the Lamb of God sacrificed from the foundation of the world – typified in Eden by the slaying of the animal, - this first response of God to sin was the shedding of blood.

Hebrews 9:22, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Whatever is lawful is legal; if it is unlawful it is illegal. No one can reject the legal aspect of our salvation upon which it is based.

We sometimes hear that 'for' doesn't always mean 'instead of' and an argument is developed upon this point. However, there are three Greek words used in the New Testament translated 'for'; they are 'huper', 'gar', and 'anti' and I quote the following from A.L. Wilson's reply to C.C. Walker's article on "The Atonement" : -

A.L. Wilson wrote - "On page 19 you string a list of texts containing the preposition "for" (gar), as an onion vendor strings onions for sale. This procedure, while it indicates the direction of the wind,

fails lamentably to demonstrate Divine truth. Our first duty here is whether “for” (gar), “on behalf of” (huper), or “in place of” (anti), are antagonistic. You are exceedingly eager these prepositions should be antagonistic, otherwise your sinful flesh hobby should be reduced to a will-o’-the-wisp. Instead of these prepositions being antagonistic, the simplest task on earth is to demonstrate them to be the closest “bosom friends,” though they have separate functions. Let us suppose that you, like Adam, through adverse circumstances, were reduced to beggary, your creditor, to secure his own, demands the sale of your possessions (life and inheritance). Along comes a kind, wealthy friend with the salutation, “Cheer up, dear C.C.Walker, I have plenty to spare, more than ever I shall require (John 12:24), I will square your bill for (gar), on your behalf (huper); in place of (anti) you.” Is there a Law Court under heaven could force you, dear friend C.C.Walker, to pay it over again? This is exactly what Jesus did for (gar), on behalf of (huper), in place of (anti) Adam. Thank God! I ask you, friend Walker, do you possess the strength to wrench asunder this threefold cord? (Exodus 4:12). Thus gar, huper, and anti, defy the powers of darkness to involve Jesus under the curse, and blot out the God-provided ransom and the Divine oath that He restored that which He took not away. Let Paul now speak:- “Tho’ He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might become rich.” Thank God again! Does not common sense alone force the Divine deduction that a condemned representative would irrevocably be as poor as those He came to save?” - End of quote.

Now for my understanding of The Atonement:

I accept the view that Jesus Christ lay down His life voluntarily for it was not taken from Him. But for whom did He lay it down? It is my understanding that He lay down His life in place of Adam’s life; a life for a life – Adam lost a perfect life by transgression and by law should have died, so Jesus gave His own perfect life (which He lived for over thirty years) and voluntarily laid it down in place of Adam’s life. Knowing the future, God allowed Adam to continue his (forfeited) life. This is why we never read of Adam’s life being taken from him. Indeed it wasn’t, and he was allowed to continue his life, though under very different circumstances.

It seems evident that Adam had been promised a reward if he continued obedient to the law God had laid down for him. Obedience to the Law had not worked but God had the next step ready prepared, and so Adam was now told that someone would come who would destroy the serpent (a wound to the head) but who would suffer a ‘bruise’ to His heel.

This ensured the beginning of the human race. But the life which Adam passed down to the next generation was a forfeited life – a life to which we have no right – a life under condemnation – a life “sold to sin.” This has been described by Christadelphians as “not our fault, but our misfortune.” But we read the opposite 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.” Again in Romans 11:32, “For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.”

The different circumstances under which Adam and Eve were now placed ensured their reward on the basis of Faith – faith in One who perfectly obeyed the Law of Moses in all things, which Jesus Christ accomplished (and He accomplished even more than the Law required), and whom we should strive to emulate. We are forgiven our sins through Jesus Christ when repentant without any further shedding of blood. This is the grace of God by which we work out our own salvation.

Furthermore, this forgiveness through Jesus Christ applied throughout all time since Adam and Eve. Animal sacrifices before Christ’s Crucifixion could not save anyone but were symbolic of the one great sacrifice of the Son of God who took away The Sin (singular) of the world, that is, the one sin of Adam. This is when the Redemption of mankind took place. Our present life is our redeemed life but not all will take advantage of this redemption. Redemption is not salvation.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” and placed Him in the strong position whereby He could save us if He chose to. He did so choose and we should ever be very thankful indeed.

Here are a few references showing it was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ that saves people of all ages:-

Romans 3:25, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;”

Hebrews 9:15, “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

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

Hebrews 10:4. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins....”

I said earlier that Jesus chose to lay down His life and it was not taken from Him. This fact surely proves that it was a matter of love. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believed on Him might not perish.” Consider too Jesus said “I and My father are one,” - One in will and One in purpose; Jesus also loved us as His own. (John 17). I believe this view gives honour where honour is due.

The nearest parallel I can think of is perhaps that of a parent, especially a mother, who sees her child in trouble and is prepared to give her own life in order her child should live. Tragically, this happens.

And now I wish to mention a few facts which seem to have been overlooked by many. There are two words for ‘life’ in the New Testament – the Greek word *psuche* which refers to our natural life passed down from our parents; and the Greek word *zoe* which refers to spirit life or eternal life which is a gift from God. More than fifty years ago I typed out some 640 texts from the New Testament where the words ‘life’, ‘alive’, ‘live’, ‘lived’, ‘quickened’ etc., were to be found and from these there is no doubt in my own mind as to how these words should be understood - although I am aware of some four or five instances where this understanding doesn’t seem to follow through, nevertheless it’s worth looking at the many clear instances such as we find in John’s Gospel; and we can take for instance chapter 10 verse 11, where we read “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life (Greek - *psuche*) for the sheep.” And again in verse 15, “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life (*psuche*) for the sheep.”

We all know that the life is in the blood, so when Jesus suffered the spear thrust in His side out came water and blood. Jesus blood was shed at the foot of the cross. Yet we read in verses 17 & 18, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life (*psuche*), that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” But here Jesus says He will take “it”, His *psuche* life - again? This confused me for some time until I linked it with John 12:25 which allows for a wider understanding - “He that loveth his life (*psuche*) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (*psuche*) in this world shall keep it unto life (*zoe*) eternal.” So what life did Jesus lay down and what life did He receive again? I believe His *psuche*/life died when His blood was shed and that He rose with *zoe*/life. I wonder if you can accept this? Note also that after His resurrection

He referred to His flesh and bones, but no mention of His blood in which had been His *psuche*/life. (Luke 24:39).

However you see it there is the fact that whenever Jesus refers to spirit life or eternal life He uses “zoe”. For example John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life (zoe), and that they might have it more abundantly.” Having a measure of spirit life now is surely our “newness of life” which we receive at our baptism of which we read in Romans 6:4, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (*zoe*) that we might have (spirit) life more abundantly with Jesus Christ our Lord and no need for our present *psuche* or natural life.

Brother Russell Gregory.

Psalm 32:8 to 11, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD, loving-kindness shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.”

“The Body of Sin”

This is a phrase used by Paul in Romans 4 verse 6 deserves to be understood correctly. So let us consider what he meant by this expression.

The connection of it is as follows, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed (or rendered powerless) that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 4:6). What is this body of sin? Is it our natural body of flesh and blood? We say, ‘No’. The literal body is just as powerful for sin after baptism as it was before; all its inclinations exist still, every impulse which leads to transgression is present as long as the body lasts in health and vigour. But “The body of sin” is rendered powerless, crucified, put off as “the old man with (all) his deeds.” What is this? We understand the apostle to mean by “the body of sin” or “the old man,” the former character and standing in Adam. This is put away by the Christ, the ransom, as soon as applied to the head and heart. To talk of putting the new man upon the old, as if the two could be conjoined, is unmitigated nonsense. “The old man” must first be “put off” from the literal person, and then, “the new man” must be put on. It is preposterous to contend that a man’s real body is “the body of sin” - if it were how in this present time could it be said to be “rendered powerless”?

I say, then, that “sinful” is not a proper adjective to qualify the noun “flesh,” but it qualifies the noun “character.” A sinful man is a man of bad character not of bad flesh. Sin is an act. (1 John 3: 4), not a fixed principle (1 Corinthians 6:18). It seems to me just as appropriate to speak of “long” noise, “green” music, “tall” tunes, etc., as to speak of “sinful” flesh.

But so ignorant was I upon this subject that I thought I should have no difficulty in finding this adjective used in connection with flesh, and betook myself to the concordance and also to the scriptures but the only place in which I could find the phrase “sinful flesh” was in Romans 8:3, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” That is the only place in which sinful flesh occurs and in that place it is no translation at all. The Greek words are “EN HOMOIOMATI”,

SARKOS - HAMATIAS which in English is “in the likeness of flesh of sin.” But in good English we don’t say “the hat of John” but John’s hat, and so we must say for SARKOS - HAMATIAS “sin’s flesh.” This is a scriptural phrase, and it sets forth a scriptural doctrine.

Let us look at it a little. You all know what is meant by the possessive case, it means “possession” or ownership, as John’s book, that is the book that belongs to John. Change the name then, and put in the word “sin;” “sins” book. The book that belongs to sin.

Let us take another figure, a figure of flesh, the horse, for instance, “Sin’s horse.” The horse which belongs to sin, which is his property. Do you think Now that sin’s horse is necessarily a horse that is made of “sinful flesh”? I think you will all see the absurdity of this conclusion. Well, let us again change the figure “sin's man,” that is a man belonging to sin. Is the man’s flesh necessarily full of sin because he belongs to sin? Certainly not. Take yet one more figure - here are two sheep they both belong to one shepherd, one strays away, the other remains in the care of the shepherd. The stray sheep wanders over a boundary line and becomes the property of a person whom we will call “Sin,” for sin is personified in the scriptures as a ‘king reigning’, etc.

Now please observe, here is the other sheep where they both were at first. Do you think the wool, do you think the skin, do you think the flesh of the stray sheep are at all changed? Do you believe that its wool, skin and flesh have become in any way different from those of the sheep which remain with their Master?

I cannot see any difference whatever. It is merely a question of possession. It may be thought that this is scarcely a proper illustration; perhaps it may be objected to as being too commercial or too carnal. Well it is carnal, inasmuch as it relates to flesh, for sheep are made of flesh. But I think it will serve my purpose, and it happens to be scriptural as you will find if you turn to Isaiah 53:6, “All we like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Now when those sheep had gone astray, whose property were they? They had served sin, and they are “sin’s sheep.”

What I want you now to consider, brethren, is this. Was Israel at all changed in regard to their flesh? I cannot see that they were.

A very important and serious change had taken place, but that change was in their character and in their relation to God, but not in their flesh, and God proposed to redeem or buy them back to Himself. Now cannot you see that if Jesus was “sin’s flesh” then God is a swindler and a bungler. We must not forget that God is just as well as a justifier, but if He effected the redemption of man by yielding up to sin what already belonged to sin, then we are redeemed by fraud.

That is the logical outcome of this “Sinful flesh” theory. No change had taken place in the quality of their flesh, it was precisely the same as before they went astray.

Brother Edward Turney

