

“The Defilement of Human Nature and its Cleansing in Christ. The Christadelphian Position Vindicated.”

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“Death and Life - The Consequences of
Adam’s sin and their Removal in Christ”**

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1. - Creation Before The Fall

When we survey the world around us we see the depths of moral depravity, a world of wickedness, violence and corruption, the culmination of nearly 6,000 years of man’s rebellion against God. But, in addition to the moral corruptness of man, even when we behold things in creation we have before us a scene which is no longer in the “very good” state in which it was originally formed by angelic hands. Rather, we see in operation a principle of corruption affecting every aspect of life, both animal and vegetable, an inexorable process of decay, bringing about the ultimate dissolution of everything living into nothing but dust and ashes. As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write of this miserable picture, familiar to each one of us, truly “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom. 8:22). What a striking contrast this is when compared with the original state of creation! Then “very good”, but now groaning and travailing in pain. What a contrast to the delightful garden into which the first human pair were placed for their enjoyment, and for God’s glory! But we know only too well that this catastrophic change came about as a direct consequence of the transgression of man. As we have written elsewhere: “The penalty for disobedience to God’s law is recorded in Genesis 3, where in verse 19, Adam was told, ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return’. And so the process of corruption began, with travail and suffering as part of that process. But the consequence of Adam’s offence was a condemnation which affected the whole of creation, not just man. For instance, we read that the ground was cursed, ‘Cursed is the ground for thy sake . . . thorns and thistles shall it bring forth . . .’ (Gen. 3:17,18). All animals were cursed, as the Lord said to the Serpent, who bore a greater condemnation: ‘thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.’

The entry of death Man’s transgression thus had a profound effect upon all creation; a process of decay, hitherto unknown, began, bringing about the death of all living things. But there are those who claim that death was originally an essential element of creation. They would have us believe that Adam was created in a mortal state, and that he needed to be kept alive by the life-giving properties of the tree of life. And, as evidence that death was an essential part of creation, they look at the cycle of life, death and decay that exists today, and point out that certain insects have a life span of only a few days, and certain predators can only survive by eating other animals.

Yet surely there is something wrong with looking at conditions in the earth after nearly 6,000 years of decay and assuming that things were the same in the Edenic paradise, especially without any Scriptural evidence that this was the case. This also overlooks plain Bible teaching that all creation is under a curse, affecting everything living, as a consequence of sin. If the Lord will, we shall consider the tree of life in the next article, but first we need to address the question, Could there really have been decay and corruption in the earth, particularly in man, before the entrance of sin?

This is an idea which Christadelphians have always resisted, and with good reason, for if we say that Adam was created inherently mortal then that would mean that mortality, and all that it involves, had nothing to do with the entrance of sin. It would be to say that transgression had no effect upon the nature of Adam, and that death is not the wages for sin (Rom. 6:23), for the process of death was working in Adam before sin,

being arrested by the partaking of the tree of life. And if we say that the sentence of death was simply that Adam was barred from the tree of life, then this would mean that the only condemnation of sin was that Adam could no longer eat a particular type of food. But the plain teaching of Scripture is very different. In Romans 5:12 we read that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so *death passed upon all men*”. Death, then, is something which came about because of sin. It “passed upon all men”, which demonstrates that, primarily, it is not so much the *event* of death being spoken of here, as the *process* of death, or mortality, which was transmitted to all of Adam’s posterity. Because of Adam’s sin, an active principle, or law of corruption, came into operation as God’s righteous sentence of condemnation was passed, something which was a hereditary condition affecting all who came from his loins.

This essential truth is succinctly expressed by the *Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith* (BASF), speaking of the violation of the Divine command:

“That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which defiled *and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity*” (Clause V). So, then, death really is wages for the work of sin, for it is testified: “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). The simple truth as revealed by Scripture is that by transgression Adam earned the wages of death; death did not have a hold on him before sin, for wages are not usually paid in the absence of work! But because the condition of Adam’s nature was physically altered with the commencement of decay within him, all his progeny were also born in this decaying condition.

It is in this way that death “passed upon all men”; as we are told elsewhere in speaking of the remedy in Christ: “since *by man came death*, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For *as in Adam all die*, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21, 22). All who are “in Adam”, through birth, inherit death as a consequence of his work of sin, but all who are “in Christ”, through rebirth (Jno. 3:3-6) by baptism, shall be resurrected, or “made alive”, as a consequence of his work of righteousness.

Adam before the fall

So, then, before sin entered into the world man was not mortal; he did not have the inworking of death in him. But neither was he immortal. We know this, for in Scripture immortality is presented as being a gift of God, granted after a probationary period of trial, and in any case an immortal being cannot become mortal and die.

The only possibility we are left with is that Adam and Eve before the fall were neither mortal nor immortal; they were in an *intermediary state*. Brother Thomas speaks of this in *Elpis Israel*: “The truth is in few words, man was created with a nature endued with certain susceptibilities. He was capable of death; and capable of endless life; but, whether he should merge into mortality; or, by a physical change be clothed with immortality, was predicated on his choosing to do good or evil. Capacity must not be confounded with impletion. A vessel may be capable of holding a pint of fluid; but it does not therefore follow that there is a pint in it, or any at all. In the Paradise of Eden, mortality and immortality were set before the man and his companion. They were external to them. They were to avoid the former, and seek after the latter, by obedience to the law of God. They were capable of being filled with either; but with which depended upon their actions”. (2)

So the first man was created a living being, made with the capacity to become mortal and die in the event of transgression, or to be transformed to immortality following a probationary period of obedience, and live for ever. And we know what took place; Adam transgressed, and, dying, he did surely die. But to the thinking Bible student this leads on to another line of enquiry. As Adam was not immortal, is it possible that, after a prolonged period, he might eventually die, if the transgression had never taken place, and if the Lord had not transformed his nature into immortality? This is one of those ‘What if . . . ?’ questions which it is not wise to dogmatise upon, but is interesting to consider. As far as the Scriptures themselves are concerned Adam did sin, and we know what followed; they do not give details on what might have been under different circumstances.

Brother Thomas gives his thoughts on this question both in *Elpis Israel* and also in an article in *The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*.³ In both he makes the suggestion that, although, as we have seen, there was no process of decay in operation within Adam or Eve before the fall as there, is in man at present, yet because the animal body with which they were created was not designed for an endless existence without a change it would eventually wear out.

Thus, in *Elpis Israel*, speaking of the hypothesis, “if they had not sinned they would nevertheless have died”, he says: “It is probable they would after a long time, if no further change had been operated upon their nature. But the Tree of Life seems to have been provided for the purpose of this change being effected, through the eating of its fruit, if they had proved themselves worthy of the favour”.⁴ And in the article he wrote: “Adam and Eve, and all the *other* animals born of the earth with themselves, would have died and gone to corruption, if there had been no transgression, *provided that there had been no further interference with the physical system than Moses records in his history of the Six Days*”.

The suggestion is, then, that the ‘animal body’ with which man was created would only have been capable of existing in its pristine condition for a certain period. It was not designed for eternity, and would eventually wear out. Yet it ought to be pointed out that this is more of an academic consideration than anything else; in actual fact it could never have happened. In Eden Adam and Eve had only two options placed before them, neither of which would have permitted the natural dissolution of their animal nature into corruption. Either they would remain faithful and, after a period of probation, be granted immortality (as we shall see in our next article), or they would disobey and be placed under the sentence of death.

Under this consideration, therefore, the issue of what may or may not have happened had there been no sin, or no transformation into immortality, is really a non-question, for this option could never have taken place. Indeed, Brother Thomas recognises this in the quotations above, suggesting that Adam’s body could have worn out in the absence of sin *if it* had not been changed to immortality by God.

The present writer’s thoughts are that, whilst Brother Thomas’s suggestion sounds plausible, and does not contradict the BASF, there is another possibility. As Adam and Eve were created in a “very good” state they would have remained in such condition unless the appearance of sin had changed things, as it duly did. It is quite possible, therefore, that the bodies of Adam and Eve, being sustained by the “breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), and having no principle of corruption within them, could have maintained an undying existence indefinitely. This is not to say that they were immortal, but that they would have lived for however long the Lord had wished them to live before rewarding them for their faithfulness, with the possibility of death occurring at any point if they had sinned. This suggestion would at least allow for there to have been a probationary period of any length of time prior to the reward of immortality. But both suggestions do have their problems, and it is unwise to dogmatise on matters upon which the Scriptures are largely silent.

Mental change

When considering the nature of Adam before the fall we need also to reflect upon the changed circumstances brought about by sin. The transgression consisted of the consumption of a particular proscribed fruit, and its consequence was that “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen. 3:7). From this it would appear that the ingestion of the fruit had a most dramatic effect upon the eaters. And this is confirmed by the angelic representative of the Most High who walked in the garden, for he directly attributed their sense of nakedness to their act of eating: “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (v. 11).

So, then, a mental change was produced, both in Adam and in Eve, resulting in a sense of carnal nakedness which did not exist prior to their eating from the forbidden tree. And this perception of nakedness was directly attributed by the Elohim to the eating. This would suggest that there was something in the fruit itself which, when ingested into their system, would operate upon their minds, and inflame the faculties controlling their propensities, changing their legitimate use into habits of an immoral kind, called lusts.

There was a process. Eve accepted the serpent’s reasoning, and so began to think in a way which was at enmity with the mind of God; she looked upon the forbidden tree as a means of satisfying her desires in a proscribed way. And then she transgressed and ate of that tree. Having adopted the mind of the serpent she

then taught her husband to do as she did, and he partook of the forbidden fruit also. The fruit, it is testified, gave them a mental awareness that they did not previously have: “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked”.

Now from these words we are not to suppose that previously they were unaware that they wore no clothes. Rather, their eyes having been opened, they saw things in a way which they had never considered before; they now had a carnal awareness of their nakedness. The serpent-mind they had willingly adopted became fixed in them, and, their minds thus having become carnal they looked upon each other’s nakedness in a carnal way.

The tree was styled the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is in itself suggestive that the effect of its fruits would be to impart a knowledge, or awareness, which they previously did not have. Prior to eating from this tree both Adam and Eve would only have fulfilled their desires in legitimate ways; it would never have occurred to them to fulfil them in ways against the principles of God. For example, Adam was placed into the garden “to dress it and to keep it” (2:15), and that would have been his desire; he knew no other way, he would never have thought of the possibility of refusing to keep the garden and do something else instead. The only way of transgression or rebellion that they were aware of was to eat from the forbidden tree, and they could never even have conceived the idea of actually doing this if it had not been presented to them by the serpent.

But after eating the fruit they had a knowledge of good and evil. As we might say, they lost their innocence. Before their eating they just did not have it in them to rebel. But afterwards they had a new awareness, for they knew that there were other possibilities to be sought out, many and varied ways in which they could cease reflecting the image and likeness of their Maker and live a life of rebellion and wickedness. As Solomon was inspired to write: “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29). The original state of man was “very good”, and “upright”. Yet consequent to eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they had the capacity to seek out many and varied ways in which to satisfy their lusts unlawfully, and this they duly did.

Prior to their eating they knew only good, but the consequence of eating from the tree was that they had a knowledge of both good and evil; and, having embraced the mind of the serpent, they naturally sought out that which was evil. In short, they adopted the carnal mind from the serpent, and it became fixed in them by the nature of their transgression, by the fruit they ate, so that they began to look upon everything around them, even their own bodies, in a carnal way.

A physical change

The sentence of God was death to those who partook of the tree: “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”. But it is important for us to realise that, when the process of death commenced in Adam, his nature itself was not changed; the nature was the same, it was the *condition* of the nature that altered. Although, as we have seen, there was no process of decay within man before the fall, nevertheless both Adam and Eve were created with the *latent capability* for death to begin in them in the event of sin.

In Genesis we read of no miraculous change taking place when the sentence of death was passed upon Adam. There was no new entity introduced; the Creator did not put death into man as if it were some kind of chemical that we can analyse under a microscope or isolate in a test tube. As Brother Thomas wrote in the article cited above: “There was no miracle wrought in executing the sentence under which Adam and Eve placed themselves. That is to say, there was no new physical principle infused into their nature that was not there before they transgressed”. Similarly, Brother Roberts wrote in answer to a correspondent: “Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatever, and the presumption and evidence are entirely the contrary way. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his maker, but not in the nature of his organisation. . . What was the difference between his position before disobedience and his position after? Simply this; that in the one case he was a living soul or natural body in probation for immortality; and in the other, he was a living soul or natural body under sentence of death. He was a living soul or natural body in both cases”.⁵ But although there was no new entity infused into the nature of man to make him become mortal, there was a distinct physical difference between Adam before the fall and Adam afterwards. The nature was the same, as Brother Roberts shows,

but the *condition* of that nature was dramatically changed. If we were to analyse Adam before and after the fall under a microscope the difference we would see is a principle of decay at work. We would see cells dying. That is, we would see the inworking of death, a process commenced because of disobedience.

As there was no miraculous change, and no new physical element of death placed in man, Adam must therefore have been created with a latent capability for corruption to begin within him, something which would only come into operation as a punishment for sin. Man was made according to the Creator's foreknowledge that transgression would take place, and had, as part of his physical make-up, the potential for death to occur under these circumstances. Brother Thomas spoke of this: "If they had continued obedient, death, though lurking within them, would not have been allowed to enter into the world; *it would have had no victims*; but they transgressed—their thinking became perverse, or contrary to the letter of the Word of God, and their practice like it,—they sinned; and the physical tendency of animal nature to dissolution became *'the law of sin and death'* within them". 6

But what began this "physical tendency ... to dissolution"? What was it that initiated the process of decay? Could it have been another quality of the fruit they had eaten? It would certainly seem appropriate; a tree of life, and a tree of death. But be that as it may, death came upon man as the consequence of his sin, as he was forewarned. Whatever the means the Creator chose to bring about the death of man, the sentence of condemnation was given: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). This was the sentence of death "which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity", as the BASF expresses it (Clause V). The sentence was the judgement of condemnation pronounced; the effect of that judgement was the initiation of a process of mortality. Thus the sentence became a physical law, which it is the misfortune of all the sons of Adam to inherit.

Essential principles

We said earlier that an element of caution needs to be exercised when dealing with 'What if... ?' questions, and in this article we have considered a number of suggestions as to the state and condition of creation, particularly man, before the fall. But, as we shall see in later articles, there are certain essential principles for us to recognise in order to understand the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless we can understand what it is that we are to be saved from, we will not understand how, or why we need salvation.

And on these essential points the Word of God is clear. Mortality, that is, the principle, or law, of decay within our physical bodies, was not in operation before the fall. Death was introduced into the world by the transgression of man. We may speculate as to what may or may not have happened without Divine intervention, but, as Brother Thomas taught, before the fall death "would have had no victims".

The whole point of the sacrifice of Christ, being the Divinely provided remedy for this lamentable state of affairs, is that sin might be forgiven and removed, in order that the death which it brought might be "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). Man has innately within him "sin in the flesh", or the serpent-mind in embryo, impulses which lead the possessors to develop the carnal mind, and which entice them into transgression. This, as we saw, came about through transgression, and the eating of the forbidden tree.

(5). "The relation of Jesus to the law of sin and death", *The Ambassador of the Coming Age*, Mar. 1869, p. 85.

(6). "Our terrestrial system before the fall", *op. cit.*, p. 160.

The victory in Christ, as we shall see in future articles, involves one strengthened to overcome the natural propensities of human nature and render perfect obedience to God. Death being the consequence of sin, when sin was thus overcome its effects could be dealt with, and the way was made open for resurrection and the bestowal of immortality. In considering these wonderful things, well might we rejoice with the apostle: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." verses 55-57

Part 2 - The Tree Of Life

In the previous article we considered the condition of creation before the fall, when the first human pair were placed in the paradise prepared for them by their Maker. Adam was formed in a “very good” state, and was therefore free from any form of defilement or decay. We demonstrated that he was not created a dying creature, but, as the Apostle Paul declared, death entered into the world subsequent to, and as a consequence of, transgression (Rom. 5:12).

But there are those who feel that Adam was created mortal, and they teach that it was necessary for Adam to eat of the tree of life in order to arrest the decaying process which was inherently within him. As the Divine command was, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” (Gen. 2:16), and as “every” here must include the tree of life, so, it is said, they must have eaten of this also. Yet, as we shall show, this is no more than supposition, as nowhere in Scripture is the tree of life spoken of in this way.

Important issue

Although it does not in itself prove our case, it should be pointed out that this is not a new idea by any means; it has been around for many years, and is a theory which Christadelphians have long resisted. In 1896 Brother Roberts spoke of it, calling it “a plausible theory to the effect that we do not inherit death from Adam by any physical law, but merely by denial of access to the tree of life: that *the sentence of death took no effect on Adam’s body*, and therefore is not in ours: that in fact we are the Very good’ and uncursed Adamic nature . . . that our nature is not an unclean and sinful nature; that there is no such thing as sin in the flesh. . . While apparently an innocuous and harmless and superior theory, *it fatally corrupts and upsets and perverts the truth at its very threshold . . .*”

These are strong words, even for Brother Roberts’ day, but when we carefully consider the logic of his reasoning we find they are fully justified. For if Adam was created already subject to decay, then the wages of sin would not be death (Rom. 6:23) but merely the exclusion from a particular life-sustaining fruit. This would then mean that the nature of man is not in itself under condemnation, as the Scriptures teach, but is still in the “very good” state in which it was first formed. And this would seriously undermine our understanding of how we are affected by Adam’s sin, for, rather than inheriting a defiled, condemned nature, as Christadelphians have always believed, the only way in which we can be under condemnation is in some legal sense; because of Adam’s sin we cannot eat from the tree.

This would totally nullify our understanding of the sacrifice of Christ, for he would not have needed to overcome the *diabolos* in our sinful nature (Heb. 2:14), and so have overcome death itself, in order to stand before God as our representative (9:24). Rather, as our nature itself would not be the problem, he must have died as some kind of substitute, to suffer our punishment so that we might walk free. And these beliefs are held in great sincerity by some of the churches around us. So, then, although it may seem to be an “innocuous” suggestion, as Brother Roberts wrote, it has serious ramifications which negate the whole of Scripture teaching concerning the atonement.

“An open letter to the readers of the ‘Christadelphian’ - ‘The Christadelphian’”, July 1896, pp. 263-4.

Did Adam eat of the tree of life?

What then do the Scriptures teach? It is true that the Lord gave permission for Adam to eat “of every tree of the garden”, but nowhere in Scripture are we told Adam actually ate of the tree of life. At best, this can be no more than an inference. Permission was given, but nowhere are we told that Adam actually did eat of every single tree which existed in the garden. And, in any case, the expression “of every tree” does not mean every tree without exception - it did not include the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Lord said: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *thou shalt not eat of it*” (Gen. 2:16,17). When Adam was given permission to eat “of every tree”, this meant every tree which was placed in the garden for food, as we shall see, not every tree which existed; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not formed for food, and was not to be so used.

But the tree of life was not formed for Adam to feed upon either. This is clear from Genesis 2:9, where a distinction is made between trees for food and those other two unique trees: “And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil”. The Lord made trees for food, and “the tree of life also”, that is, in addition to and distinct from the other trees. Thus God allowed Adam to eat of any food-bearing tree, but this did not include the tree of life or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which were in different categories of their own.

We read of the tree of life again in Genesis 3, following the transgression of our first parents and the subsequent covering of their nakedness: “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and *take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever*: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden” (vv. 22,23). Here the tree is spoken of as giving everlasting life; and clearly, if the tree of life gave immortality then Adam could not have eaten from it or he would still be alive. In addition to this, the phrase, “lest he . . . take also of the tree of life”, is used, which implies that he had not previously eaten of the tree.

But, against this, those who press the idea tell us that, although the Hebrew word for “also” is usually translated in this way, it can also mean ‘again’, which would suggest that Adam had eaten of the tree, and that he was being prevented from doing so again. And as to the tree of life giving everlasting life, they tell us that the Hebrew word translated “ever” (as in “live for ever”) does not in itself contain the idea of eternity (although it can have this meaning), but literally means ‘a time of unspecified duration’, and can also be used for short time periods. So the fruit of the tree had previously been eaten, we are told, and the eating of it gave Adam and Eve life for a limited period, which meant that they had to keep eating it at intervals to prevent death. Thus the sentence against Adam needed only to be exclusion from this type of food and he would naturally die.

Again, there are clear errors in this reasoning. Firstly, it is recognised that the AV rendering of these words is in accordance with the meaning that they can carry. And secondly, it is also recognised that the AV rendering is the usual way these words are translated. Thus the case is far from proved. In addition to this, there is a third point. Surely there is something wrong with building a doctrinal structure, the logical outcome of which undermines fundamental points of our faith, upon a foundation which is no stronger than the possible meaning of two Hebrew words.

The tree of life in Scripture

As a body we have long recognised that the correct way of understanding Bible teaching, and learning doctrines, is by comparing Scripture with Scripture. So, then, to learn about the tree of life we need to consider what other parts of Scripture tell us.

In the Apocalypse the tree of life is used to represent the reward given to the faithful: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). Here, being permitted to eat of the tree of life represents the reward given to those who have “overcome” a period of trial. This clearly contrasts with the expulsion from the Edenic paradise of those who failed to overcome, in order to prevent them from partaking of the life-giving tree, and also suggests that, had Adam overcome, he also would have been permitted to eat from the tree as a reward for his faithfulness.

We read of this antitypical tree again in Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life. . .” Here we have another contrast with those who did not obey God’s commandment: they did not have a right to the tree of life, and were driven from its presence.

From these two passages, then, we learn that, as a symbol in the Apocalypse, the eating of the tree of life speaks of a reward given to those who endure and overcome in a period of trial, and who obey the commandments of God. It speaks of the bestowal of immortality by the Lord Jesus Christ upon his brethren. We would suggest that if in Eden the tree was not present for this purpose it would not be appropriate for it to be used as such a symbol in the Apocalypse.

When we consider the literal tree in Eden we have every indication that it existed ready for the rewarding of man's faithfulness (had he obeyed the Divine command) with the bestowal of immortality. Indeed, its very name, the "tree of lives" (as it could be better rendered), is suggestive of this; it would give life to all those who would partake of it. In this it stands as a great contrast to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which would cause death to those who transgressed the command in partaking of it. How appropriate for there to be a tree which would give life consequent to obedience and a tree which would be the cause of death to those who transgressed!

This appears to be the reasoning of Brother Thomas, for, speaking of the tree of life in *Elpis Israel*, he wrote: "Its fruit, however, was of a quality entirely opposite to that of which they had eaten. Both trees bore good fruit; but that of the Tree of Life had the quality of perpetuating the living existence of the eater for ever . . . It is probable that, had he [Adam] been obedient to the law of the Tree of Knowledge, he would have been permitted to eat of the Tree of Life, after he had fulfilled his destiny as an animal man; and, instead of dying away into dust, have been 'changed in the twinkling of an eye'. 2

What this means is that Adam and Eve had immortality to look forward to had they remained obedient. But, following the fall, access to the tree was barred, and the sinful pair were thrust out from its presence. We can only begin to imagine how Adam and Eve must have felt outside the paradise in Eden, knowing that they were to lead a life of travail and suffering, as dying they would surely die. At one time they were faced with the prospect of being like the Elohim in nature, if they had obeyed, but now all was vanity as they were denied access to the tree of life and condemned to return to the ground from whence they came.

Hope deferred

But this hope was only deferred, not removed altogether. The Lord in His kindness and mercy had ordained a "way" back to the tree, which was preserved by the cherubim and the flaming sword placed at the entrance to the garden (Gen. 3:24). And even before their expulsion from Eden, both Adam and Eve were taught the need for sacrifice in order to provide a covering (atonement) for sin, a practice they were to continue at the entrance to the garden, as we learn from the opening verses of Genesis 4.

This situation is aptly described in Proverbs: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, *it is a tree of life*" (13:12). Despite the sickness of heart Adam would experience because of the condemnation of death, he nevertheless had a hope of life. As he stood at the entrance to the garden, which was also the place where "the way of the tree of life" began, to offer his sacrifice, it is quite possible that he would be able to look beyond the sword of fire wielded by the cherubim of glory, along the way to the tree in the distance, yielding its life-giving fruits. Indeed, the role of the cherubim to "keep" or "preserve" the way would suggest this, for the record states that it was not simply the entrance to the way but the way itself which was preserved.

The features of the cherubim would teach Adam what he must become, being a depiction of the glorified body of Christ (Ezek. 1). The fiery sword, being the means by which the way was preserved, would teach that he, as all who seek "glory and honour and immortality" (Rom. 2:7), had the duty to preserve the way of God (see Psalm 119:33-35, and contrast with Genesis 6:12) by the effective use of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17), cutting down the high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of the Truth (2 Cor. 10:5). And being a fiery sword, as well as speaking of the bright flame of the Word it would also teach him that keeping the true way is often accompanied by a fiery trial of affliction (1 Pet. 4:12).

And so, as Adam gazed past these things along the way to the tree, which was "afar off" (Heb. 2. Fourteenth edition, p. 70. 11:13) in the midst of the garden, he would be able to look beyond his sentence of death, and all that it entailed, past the depiction of what he must do to be saved, to the glory which lay ahead. And this place itself, being a place of sacrifice, would teach that the means of access to the things that this tree offered would ultimately be provided by the one who had the power to overcome, through death, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of life

The fruit of the work of Christ is that a means is provided for those who seek to “overcome” to gain access to the antitypical tree of life. Thus we read in Proverbs 11:30: “The fruit of the righteous [or righteous one] is a *tree of life*; and he that winneth souls is wise”. The Lord Jesus is the one who is righteous and wise, and who is able to win (or take, as the word means) souls from the bondage of death, that they may be redeemed by his sacrifice. Having truly “overcome”, he is himself the antitypical tree of which believers must partake in order to be ultimately glorified in immortality. As he said: “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath *eternal life*”) and again, in a clear allusion to Genesis 3:22: “he that *eateth* of this bread *shall live for ever*” (Jno. 6:54,58).

Here we need to appreciate that the Lord is speaking as “the Word ... made flesh” (1:14). To partake of the true bread of life, which is the Lord Jesus, as the antitypical manna, is to consume the spiritual nourishment which comes from him, and this is the word which he spoke. As he said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4). The words which proceed from God, as spoken through His Son and others, constitute this spiritual bread of which we must partake. And the Lord Jesus, being the Word made flesh, is an embodiment of that Word, being the fulfilment of the things testified in the oracles of God concerning him.

Thus, to feed upon the Word which testifies of the Saviour is to feed upon the Saviour himself. To feed upon this Word is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ (Jno. 6:56), which will enable us to partake of the everlasting life he is able to impart, for to partake of him is to partake of the antitypical tree of life.

The Word of God being the Word of life, those whose tongues are guided and influenced by it are able themselves to impart words of life. As it is written: “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life” (Prov. 15:4)—words which have their fullest application to the Lord Jesus, whose words truly can give life to the hearers. This being so, it is not surprising to find the tree of life being spoken of in connection with the wisdom that comes from hearkening to these words. Thus we read in Proverbs 3 of the wisdom of God: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a *tree of life* to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her” (w. 17,18).

Wisdom, then, is a tree of life to those who are able and willing to grasp hold of her. Being a tree of life, her “ways” and her “paths” are paths of the tree of life (*cf.* Gen. 3:24) along which a person must walk in order to find life and peace, a peace which “passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). The ways of wisdom collectively form the narrow way that the Lord informs us leads us to life, as opposed to the broad way that leads to destruction: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mt. 7:13,14).

Just as Adam and Eve were faced with two trees, a tree of life and a tree of death, so their progeny are faced with two ways. And just as Adam was led by his wife to walk the path to the tree of death, so multitudes have chosen ever since to walk in this way, a way of wilful disobedience to the will of their Maker. The other way is a narrow way, which must be sought for. Although it is partly obscured by the traditions of men, it is being kept open by those who wield the sword of the spirit, cutting away the thorns of apostasy. This way, which must be diligently sought for in these days of corruptness and evil, is a narrow way. Being narrow, it is not designed to accommodate the ignorant multitudes who follow every whim and fancy of man, but those few who would walk it in faith, looking to the end, beyond the trial of this life, to the tree of life in the Kingdom, even the Lord Jesus himself (Heb. 12:1,2).

Partaking of the tree

But there is a further point to consider. The question naturally arises, If the tree of life gave immortality, why did Adam and Eve not simply go to that tree and eat from it after the fall? Indeed, it would seem that they did have opportunity to go to the tree as, after they transgressed, and before their appearance before God, there was a time when they were hiding in the trees of the garden. A possible explanation is that there was no fruit on that tree for them to eat, for the Scriptures say nothing about it yielding fruit prior to transgression.

In Genesis 1:14 we read that there were “seasons”, and we know that trees bear fruit in their particular season. In perfect conditions trees would give fruit at their appointed time. And as the tree of life was created to be the reward for faithfulness, the season for it to bear fruit surely would be when faith had been shown. Being a type of eternal life in Christ for those who are in need of healing from mortality, in the event of transgression taking place, another season for it to bear fruit would surely be after transgression, and after a way of reconciliation had been appointed. If there had been fruit on this tree, we would assume that there would have been great urgency to have driven man out from before it. Yet in Genesis 3 we find that this was the last thing to be done, immediately following the appointment of sacrifice.

So, then, the presence of the tree of life in the garden taught Adam and his wife that if they were faithful their faithfulness would be rewarded. But even in the event of their transgression there would be a way of life provided—on God’s terms, as it duly was. The expulsion of Adam and his wife from the garden taught that access to the way of life can only be achieved by the means of God’s appointing.

Thus the tree stands as a powerful exhortation to us not to devise fables which contradict the main thrust of Scripture, not to walk along the broad way that leads to destruction, but rather to understand and accept the way of salvation as appointed by the Lord Himself. We must seek wisdom and then walk in its ways, which are the ways to the tree of life. And then, if we show ourselves to be faithful, if we “keep” God’s ways, if we seek to “overcome” sin, then by God’s grace, when the Lord returns, we will partake of the antitypical tree and so be “partakers of the divine nature”, as the Lord has promised (2 Pet. 1:4).

Part 3 - The Defilement Of Human Nature

In order for us to understand the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ, we need to recognise the catastrophic effect that Adam’s transgression had on the human race. To put it simply, we will not understand the solution we have in Christ if we do not understand the problem we inherit from Adam.

In Romans 5:12 we read of the consequence of Adam’s sin: “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men”. And again, in 1 Corinthians 15:21 we are informed that, “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead”. As we have seen in the previous articles, this proves that death really is “the wages of sin” (Rom. 6:23), and was not therefore inherently in Adam from his creation. But the death being referred to here is not so much the *event* of death as the *process* of death, which works within each one of us. It “passed upon all men”, which proves it to be an hereditary condition.

Thus the sentence passed upon Adam became a physical principle, or law, which was inherited by all who came from him. As the *Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith* (BASF) so succinctly expresses it, the sentence given against Adam was “a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity” (Clause V). This is the condemnation which we bear from Adam; as it is written: “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom. 5:18). This is a vital point to note; the condemnation we bear is not a legal judgement whereby we are punished for the offence of another. Rather, it is the physical inheritance of the nature of Adam, placed under the condemnation of death because of sin. The reality is a process of corruption at work within us, which will eventually bring us to the grave. And this process working within us is termed “death” in Romans 5:12 because the culmination of that process is the event of death. The event cannot exist without the cause; the dissolution of our entire being into dust is the culmination of the “death” we physically inherit from Adam.

The law of sin and death

But with the sentence, or law, of death, we also inherit what the Apostle Paul terms “the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25), a principle of moral corruption. We have within us “the motions of sins” (v. 5), which we are “without strength” (5:6) to overcome. It is this which has the power of death, and is styled “the devil [*diabolos*]” (Heb. 2:14). It is a bias, or propensity, to transgress. Because it is a principle which inevitably culminates in sin, it is described in Scripture as “sin” (Rom. 7:17) or “sin in the flesh” (8:3), in the same way that the process of dying is called “death” (see above). In both cases the cause is described by its effect. Just

as we inherit “death”, so we inherit “sin”, and it is seen to be sin by the works it produces (7:13; cf. Mt. 7:16-18).

We do not inherit Adam’s so-called ‘original sin’, bearing the punishment for his crime, as the churches teach. Such an idea is refuted in Scripture; see Ezekiel 18:20 and Romans 5:14. Rather, it is our misfortune to inherit an inbuilt propensity to transgress. It is in this sense that we read: “by one man’s disobedience *many were made sinners*” (Rom. 5:19). That is, as a consequence of Adam’s offence, all his progeny are born into a state of affairs whereby it is inevitable that they also become sinners, since they inherit his sinful nature.

So then, we have in our physical make-up, by inheritance, two principles or laws, one leading to moral corruption, one leading to physical corruption. In Scriptural terms these two components are collectively referred to as “the law of sin and death” (8:2), from which we are freed in Christ Jesus. But notice the order here; this law is made up of two components, sin being mentioned first. Firstly there is sin, secondly there is death, which is the Lord’s judgement upon sin.

It is a principle of Scripture that God rightly requires that all who share Adam’s sinful nature be condemned to the grave. We shall see in our final article that part of the declaration of God’s righteousness made by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:25) was the demonstration that God rightly requires the condemnation to the grave of human nature in its condition of sinfulness. Christ partook of human nature “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). It was in his death that Christ destroyed sin in the flesh, the *diabolos*, “that which crosses, or causes to cross over”, that is, causes to trespass, or transgress the commands of God. And so, when he rose from the dead, he was “freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7), having been given immortality, so that he might now be “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26).

From the above we can see that we do not die because of Adam’s sin, as some claim, but rather from that which ensues from it. We have a nature which is physically defiled by sin in the sight of God, a nature which is under condemnation. And we become worthy of that condemnation when we transgress individually, and earn the wages of death.

Defiled by sin

The Scriptures are clear that a person is considered by God to be unclean or defiled because of evil works. Thus we read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: “That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mk. 7: 20-23). We become defiled by the sins we commit. But some seem to be blinded by this to the fact that our nature is in itself unclean. They say that the only thing which causes defilement is individual transgression. But this cannot be the case, for the Lord here teaches that these defiling works “come from within”. Are we to suggest that when “within” they are clean, but when outside they are unclean?

The truth of the matter is that wicked works, such as those the Lord enumerates, come from submitting ourselves to “the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25), the *diabolos* which dwells within each of us. Thus the apostle exhorts: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (6:12). In the same chapter he describes this “sin” which reigns in the disobedient as “uncleanness”: “as ye have yielded your members servants to *uncleanness* and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (v. 19). Defiling works, then, are produced by yielding ourselves “servants to uncleanness”, and willingly doing things contrary to the will of God.

The terms “uncleanness” and “defilement” in Scripture do not speak of literal dirt, “the filth of the flesh” (1 Pet. 3:21). Rather they describe how we stand in the eyes of our Maker; they are descriptive of a condition of sinfulness. The Lord does not regard us as being sinners just because we have sin in the flesh, sin within us; only when we actually transgress do we become worthy of the wages of death. And this is what we are being taught in Romans 6. Yes, we have something which the Lord views as “uncleanness” within us, for our flesh is hereditarily defiled. But only when we yield ourselves “servants to uncleanness”

by transgressing do we become morally defiled before Him. This is the truth of the matter; all those evil works which Christ lists as coming from the uncleanness “within” cause us to become morally defiled before the Lord God our Maker.

Unclean from birth

Human nature is defiled by sin, even from birth. Thus in Job 14:4 we read: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one”. So it is that, even before a child can be regarded as being sinful in its own right, having done neither good nor evil (Rom. 9:11), it is “unclean”, having “the law of sin and death” within it. This is why babies sometimes die, even in the womb; not because of their own sins, but because of the nature it is their misfortune to inherit. And when we begin to realise these truths, we realise how helpless we are to save ourselves.

Even from birth, sin in the flesh begins to assert itself, leading its possessors into iniquity. And so we read: “The wicked are estranged from *the womb*: they go astray as *soon as they be born*, speaking lies” (Ps. 58:3). And the apostle likewise teaches: “in time past ye walked according to ... the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were *by nature the children of wrath*, even as others” (Eph. 2:2,3). Even from birth we begin to be led astray by the desires of the flesh, making us deserving only of the wrath of God for the sins we inevitably commit. As the apostle declared: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) *dwelleth no good thing*: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18).

The power of the Word

But although by nature he had “no good thing” within him, the apostle had taken into his mind another law, the law of God. As there is enmity between the law of God and the carnal mind (8:7), he experienced a warfare within himself between the two: “I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see *another law* in my members, warring against the law of my mind” (7:22,23).

There is, then, a power which is available to us to assist us in overcoming the *diabolos*. This is the Word of God, which is “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18; Heb. 4:12). It is by “taking heed” to this that we are able to “cleanse [our] way” (Ps. 119:9), for it is by absorbing the principles thereof into our way of thinking that our minds are cleansed (Eph. 5:26, 27). Thus we begin to turn away from the ways of sin to act and think more in harmony with the ways of our Maker.

In James 1:21 we are exhorted: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”. We must seek to implant the Word of God into our minds to give us the strength to resist sin. But the implanting of the Word of God is a voluntary action. The “carnal mind”, that is, the natural mind in all its sinfulness, came about through the voluntary action of our first parents, who of their own volition allowed the word of the serpent to become implanted into their minds, something which became enfixed, and passed to all their descendants. It is one of the beauties of the Divine arrangement that of our own volition we can receive, and implant in our minds, a powerful weapon in contending with sin, that we might develop a spiritual mind, a mind more like that of the God we serve.

This Word, thus received, is a powerful influence in combating the serpent mind within us; but even with this we can never fully overcome - only the Lord Jesus could do that. When the apostle described the conflict in his mind he spoke of a warfare he was *losing*: “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin* which is in my members” (Rom. 7:23). Even the Apostle Paul found himself being drawn captive by sin; how much more we also? Even with the power of the Word, the innate impulses to disobey are too strong for us, we are “without strength” to save ourselves from sin. But the final victory is yet future, when the Lord will transform our weak and sinful bodies to be “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21), immortal, and free from sin. The Lord has provided the means through His Word for us to change our vile minds, in measure, to correspond more with His ways—if we choose to do so. If we do this, and declare war on the greatest enemy of mankind, He has

guaranteed us the victory through the Captain of our salvation, who will change our vile bodies, and bestow immortality upon us as his faithful fellow-soldiers.

The lesson from the Law

Under the Law of Moses there was uncleanness which was not as a direct result of transgression. A woman was unclean due to childbirth (Lev. 12). Lepers were unclean, not because they had transgressed but because of their disease (14:1- 32). The high priest had to be cleansed at his consecration (8:34) as well as for his transgressions. In addition to this, atonement was made for inanimate objects that were regarded as being unclean: the holy place, the tabernacle itself and the brazen altar (16:20), and the golden altar of incense (v. 18).

In these cases uncleanness was not simply to do with acts of sin, but *association* with transgression, “because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins” (v. 16). The people were not simply transgressors, they were unclean, for they had the disease of sin as part of their nature (Rom. 7:17; 8:3). And even inanimate objects became unclean *by association* with the uncleanness of the people.

These features of the Mosaic system were “patterns” of things yet to come in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 9:22,23 we read that “almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that *the patterns of things* in the heavens should be purified with these; but *the heavenly things themselves* with better sacrifices than these”. The shadowy institution of the Law was the type, but what are “the heavenly things themselves” which also needed purification by sacrifice? The Lord Jesus was the antitypical temple (Jno. 2:18-21), altar (Heb. 13:10), high priest (4:14), sacrifice (Jno. 1:29) and mercy seat (Rom. 3:25). Therefore he must be the substance of the “patterns” of the Law; he, and his brethren whom he came to save, are the “heavenly things themselves”, purified by “better sacrifices”.

Jesus Christ of our nature

Just as we are defiled in the sight of God, having a sinful nature by inheritance, the Lord Jesus, being “made of a woman” (Gal 4:4), “also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb. 2:14). He inherited the defilement of sin, for he was “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3) that he might destroy the *diabolos* in himself. The Lord Jesus, although morally perfect, having never once transgressed, because of the nature he bore nevertheless needed to be cleansed by his own sacrifice in order to enter into the antitypical holy of holies. This is the testimony of Scripture: “Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but *by his own blood* he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” 2 (Heb. 9:11,12).

As the antitypical high priest, following the pattern of the Law of Moses, the Lord had to offer for himself first, in order that he could then make reconciliation for the sins of the people. The Lord Jesus is the one “who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: *for this he did once*, when he offered up himself” (7:27). Notice the words, “this he did once”, that is, offer for himself and then for the people. The Lord did not need to offer up two sacrifices as did the high priest under the Law, for he achieved both effects in his one great sacrifice.

The simple fact is that, just as his brethren have the defilement of “sin in the flesh”, so did he. In order for him to appear in the presence of his Father as the antitypical high priest for us, this defilement had to be removed, as we shall consider in more detail in the final article, if the Lord will. The fact that everything accomplished in the sacrifice of Christ was for us should never blind us to the fact that it was *for himself first*, in order that it might be for us. Unless the Lord destroyed the *diabolos* in himself through death, there was no scope for it to be ultimately removed in us.

Christ's overcoming of sin

In the verse cited above we read of how, under the Law, the high priest offered, "first for his own sins, and then for the people's", and the apostolic commentary said that "this he did once", in speaking of how the Lord Jesus offered for his sin-nature, then for his people. But against this it is sometimes said that it is wrong to claim that a sacrifice for transgressions under the Law of Moses represents a sacrifice for nature, they are two different things. And it is further added that in any case, under the Law, there were no sacrifices for nature, only for transgressions. Then it is further reasoned that, as sacrifice is only for transgressions, the Lord Jesus, who never transgressed, did not need sacrifice for himself to be cleansed. However, apart from denying the clear teaching of the verses cited above, this really misses the point of the Mosaic sacrificial system.

Under the Law, although "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4), a person could receive forgiveness through faith in what the sacrifices pointed forward to. Their sins were taken away, not through any value these sacrifices had in themselves, but because they represented the Lord Jesus Christ, who died "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [covenant]" (9:15). But even though a person's sins were taken away through the offering of these sacrifices, the root problem, the *diabolos*, alias sin in the flesh, could never be dealt with by law. "The law made nothing perfect, but was an introduction of a better hope" (7:19, Tyndale).

We have already seen that the condemnation we are under from Adam is *physical*. The law of sin and death is *physical*, and can never be removed until the transformation of nature at the judgement seat. That is why there was no sacrifice for nature under the Law. There is no process of cleansing that can somehow make the *diabolos* acceptable with God; it must be "condemned" and "destroyed", something the Law could never do.

But the sacrifice of Christ was a "greater" sacrifice. The Lord Jesus had the *diabolos within himself*, and so, "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" (Rom. 8:3). Because of the inherent weakness of the flesh, a man living under the Law could never render perfect obedience; and so the root problem went uncondemned, it was never overcome. Rather, the Law condemned the man as a sinner, as sin in the flesh reigned in him. Yet God could, and did, condemn "sin in the flesh" in His Son, in whom it resided during his days of mortality.

Our involvement in Christ's victory

As no sacrifice under the Law could possibly be for the cleansing of nature, for the reason just given, how then could the Law foreshadow the Lord's victory over the *diabolos* in himself first, that he might then provide a foundation for the forgiveness of others? How appropriate it was that on the Day of Atonement the high priest after the order of Aaron offered first for his own sins, then for those of his people! Acts of transgression are but the outward manifestations of an inward problem, a problem which the Lord fully overcame. But the cleansing work of the Lord Jesus was enacted under the Law by a sinner, who did need a sacrifice for transgression.

How appropriate then, in the shadowy representation of the Law, for the sinner to be cleansed from his own sin first, in order that he might then fulfil his office for the people!

In Hebrews 9:23 "the heavenly things themselves", consisting of Christ and his people, were cleansed by "better sacrifices" (note the plural). What a beautiful pattern of this we have under the Law, where the sacrifice for the people was provided by the people (Lev. 16:5), the blood of which was mingled with the sacrifice offered by the high priest (v. 18), and sprinkled on the altar! Yes, we are cleansed from sin through the sacrifice of Christ. Yes, the victory is well and truly won by God through him. But we also have our part to play, for if we are to be represented in Christ we must seek to do as he did. Thus the apostle exhorts: "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" (Rom. 12:1). When we consider all that the Lord has gone through for us, it is only "reasonable" for us, like the people under the Law, also to provide a sacrifice. The sacrifice is ourselves, mingled with that of our Lord, as we are "baptized into his death" (6:3).

These are the “better sacrifices” by which “the heavenly things themselves” are cleansed. The Lord Jesus has provided a way of cleansing through himself. By presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, baptized into his death, we become part of that sacrifice, and so find cleansing and forgiveness through him. We said earlier that, in order to understand the solution in Christ, we need firstly to understand the nature of the problem. Put simply, the nature of the problem is the problem of our nature.

As children of Adam we are defiled by sin, and “without strength” to save ourselves. No matter how much effort we make, we continually fail to overcome sin, and rather find ourselves being overcome by sin. Well might we lament with the apostle: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And well might we rejoice with him: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord ... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (7:24-8:2).

Part 4 - The Purpose Of The Sacrifice Of Christ

In his first Epistle to Timothy the Apostle Paul was inspired to write of the purpose of God in Christ as follows: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1:15). So then, it was out of God’s love for the world into which His Son was born that in him a way of salvation was provided for sinful man (Jno. 3:16). But that was only part of the work, for in the Divine scheme of things the salvation of sinners is not an end in itself; rather it is a means of fulfilling the Creator’s greater overreaching purpose, which is to populate the entire earth with a single family, each member of which displays His glorious attributes.

We read of the purpose of the Lord with man in Genesis 1: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them” (vv. 26,27). From this we learn that the Creator formed beings who were to be both in His image and likeness and in that of the heavenly host (indicated by the plural “our”). In the natural order of things sons share the likeness of their father, displaying his characteristics. And as in the natural, so in the spiritual; as a son (Lk. 3:38), Adam was to be in the image and likeness of his Father-maker.

Out of Adam the Lord formed Eve, who was therefore also in His image and likeness; and while they were in their “very good” state He “blessed them, and . . . said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [Heb. fill] the earth” (Gen. 1:28). From these words we learn that it was from Adam that the Father was to develop a Divine family, each member of which would be in His image, so filling the entire earth with His glorious attributes. Indeed, this is the Father’s stated purpose: “as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD [Yahweh]” (Num. 14:21) - that is, the earth will be inhabited (Isa. 45:18) with a multitude of sons who reflect the glory of their Father.

A corrupt world

Yet Adam failed. We see the evidence of this around us, for rather than being populated with sons of God the earth is filled with death-stricken sinners who, although they are still in the physical image of their Creator (Jas. 3:9), fail to show His moral likeness. Speaking of what man filled the earth with instead, the Apostle John declares: “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is *not of the Father*, but is of the world” (1 Jno. 2:16). Notice this; “all that is in the world” is “not of the Father”, having degenerated to corruption and wickedness. All that we see around us manifests, not the image of the Father, but the lust and pride of men, who despise and pervert the ways of the Most High.

In the days of Noah, the Creator “saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). This is the unrestrained nature of man, filling the earth with all his lusts: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; *for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth*” (vv. 11,12). Truly all that is in the world is “not of the Father”; for the Father’s way, the way to the antitypical tree of life, is being corrupted in our day with the folly and the vanities of men, just as in the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37). Yet all this, it is testified, “passeth away”, to make way for that which shall abide for ever (1 Jno. 2:17; Heb. 12:27).

The Lord Jesus said to those who perverted and corrupted the way in his generation: “Ye are of your father the devil [*diabolos*], and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Jno. 8:44). The lusts of man, which comprise “all that is in the world”, are derived, not from the Father of the Lord Jesus, but from another source, another ‘father’, the *diabolos*, and were willingly adopted by those who would become his sons, and this we see in the Genesis record.

The sinful inclinations of man originated, not from God, but from the serpent which He created. The serpent used false reasoning to stimulate Eve to transgress the command of God, and Eve willingly adopted that reasoning, having been “deceived” (1 Tim. 2:14) by it, and transgressed. She then applied what she had learned to teach her husband this new-found ‘wisdom’, and he hearkened to her voice (Gen. 3:17) and transgressed also.

So it was that the first humans willingly adopted the mind of the serpent, styled by the Apostle Paul the “carnal mind”, or the thinking of the flesh, which is “enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). The sentence of death was passed, and this, with the tendency to transgress, has been transmitted to all who came from the loins of Adam as “the law of sin and death”, as we have seen in previous articles.

The serpent, then, was the “father” of all wickedness, and all who manifest his mode of thought are spiritually his children. “He was a murderer from beginning” (Jno. 8:44), because it was by seducing Eve that he caused the death of our first parents, and subsequently all their progeny, who have the *diabolos* inherent within them. Truly “all that is in the world” is “not of the Father”, but from man, from his carnal thoughts adopted by his own volition from the serpent. Man is thus caught in a cycle of things whereby he cannot save himself.

The Saviour provided

So it is that in this lamentable state of affairs the Lord has intervened: “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto him; and His righteousness, it sustained him” (Isa. 59:16; *cf.* 63:5). Out of His grace He has extended His arm to us (Isa. 52:10), who are unworthy of the least of His mercies. Out of love He provided even His only begotten Son to die for us “the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). But out of appreciation for what has been done for us we must reverentially enquire into these things. We must seek to understand more fully the principles being worked out in the atoning work of Christ. How is it that the sacrifice of Christ can provide salvation? How is it that in the death and subsequent resurrection of the Son of God we can be freed from sin?

Having considered the nature of the problem we are in a position to see logically what was needed to provide the solution in Christ. In order that man might be reconciled to God, the great enemy within, the *diabolos*, must be overcome, and finally destroyed. And the only means by which this could be done was for one who snared our sinful, death-stricken nature, with all its lusts, to be Divinely strengthened to overcome those lusts, and so mirror the image of his Father. This was to be the one described by the psalmist as “the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself” (Ps. 80:17).

Notice the emphasis here; the Lord Jesus was “*the son of man*”, made strong by God. Being “the son of man”, just as his brethren are flesh and blood, with all that entails, “he also himself likewise took part of the same”, as the apostle declares. But why? Why was it so essential for him to be identical to us in sharing our nature? “. . . that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil [*diabolos*]” (Heb. 2:14). The problem to be overcome is “the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25), or “him that had the power of death”, styled the *diabolos*. The term *diabolos* signifies “that which crosses, or causes to cross over”.¹ It is that which causes us to trespass, or transgress the Divine command, and it is also called “sin in the flesh”. But how could the Lord destroy it if it were not in him to destroy? And how could it be in him unless he were also of Adamic descent? 1. J. Thomas, *Eureka*, Vol. 1, p. 249.

Christ of our nature

There are those who out of a sincere but mistaken reverence for the Lord Jesus cannot accept that there could be sin in any form in him. But just as the Apostle Paul had the *diabolos*, or “sin in the flesh”, in him,

so did the Lord Jesus, or else it could not have been destroyed by him. Although he was without transgression he nevertheless had to have within him *the cause* of sin, that he might overcome it. He had to share the experience of all men in having sin dwelling within him (Rom. 7:17) in order that he might be “in all points tempted like as we are” (Heb. 4:15) and overcome those temptations. Otherwise the sacrifice of Christ would have been no more than a charade.

Unless sin had existed in the flesh of Christ it could not have been condemned or destroyed there. This is the Divine testimony, that “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh*” (Rom. 8:3). To truly revere the Son of God is to accept these facts in all humility, and marvel at the way he overcame and reflected his Father’s image, despite the weakness and sinfulness of the flesh he came in.

And here we see the dual origin of our Lord, for the whole work was a work of the Father. Jesus said: “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God” (Mt. 19:17). That is, even the Lord Jesus was not “good” of his own self; the goodness which he had was the goodness he reflected from God (Ex. 33:19). The works of the Lord Jesus were his Father’s works, and all that he did was from God (Jno. 14:10). He was “the son of man”, sharing mortal weakness, yet was “made strong” by his Father that he might overcome. He was God manifest in sinful flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

Overcoming sin

Being “the Son of the Highest” (Lk. 1:32) the Lord Jesus, whilst inheriting the *diabolos* from Mary, also had the capacity to overcome. He was able to resist “the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). He inherited qualities from both parents: sin in the flesh from Mary and the capacity to resist from His Father. He was able to resist the one by the other, and so to develop the other that he was able to testify of himself: “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jno. 14:9). He overcame sin throughout his life, being divinely strengthened to do so, and perfectly mirrored the image of the Father Whose works he did - not the *diabolos*, but “the Most High”, Who created all things.

But the critics say, “This isn’t fair. If Jesus was strengthened to overcome, and we are not, then God expects more from us than from Jesus”. But let the critic be silenced by the fact that all that was accomplished in Christ was for us; and the reason why the Lord was “made strong” was for our salvation. Such thoughts emanate only from the flesh, which takes no pleasure in things Divine and seeks only to exalt and justify itself. Let the critic reflect upon the sufferings of Christ leading up to and including the crucifixion, and then ask again whether the Lord requires as much of us as of Christ.

But as we have shown in the previous article, we are not altogether helpless, for there is a power given to us from God to strengthen us in our warfare against the flesh: the power of the Word of God. By its very nature it has a power intrinsic within itself to war against the serpent-thoughts within us. But whether or not we make use of this power, or indeed receive it into our thoughts, is our choice. Of man’s own volition the word of the serpent was received, and of man’s own volition the Word of God can be received to counter the serpent mind.

All this is of the Lord’s providing, as it is written: “it is God Which worketh in you *both to will and to do* of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). God works in us through His Word, “which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). It is this Word, when believed, which creates in us a desire to perform the things of God, *and enables us to do it* - “both to will and to do of His good pleasure”. By our very nature we cannot do the good pleasure of God without being illuminated and strengthened by the power he has provided, vested in the gospel believed and understood. Truly every aspect of the work of salvation is of God, not of ourselves or of our works, “lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9).

Sin destroyed in death

The Lord Jesus, being the Son of God, had the capacity to overcome the temptations within him throughout his life. But sin in the flesh did not just have to be overcome, or suppressed, in life; it had to be destroyed in death: “he also himself likewise took part of the same; that *through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death” (Heb. 2:14). Testifying of his crucifixion, the Lord Jesus said: “as Moses lifted

up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (Jno. 3:14). The serpent lifted up by Moses was a brazen *representation* of the source of the afflictions of the children of Israel which were brought about because of disobedience. They were afflicted with serpents whose bite caused death, yet in the serpent lifted up by Moses they saw a serpent rendered *venomless* and harmless. And it was through looking upon that serpent that they could be healed and find life.

So it was, when the Lord Jesus was “lifted up” on the stake, that there was a public declaration being made. Here was “sinful flesh” exhibited for all to see, yet sin had been rendered powerless by the one who had the strength to overcome. In the nailing of our Lord to the cross we see before us him that had the power of death bruising the heel of the one who was delivering it the final deathblow (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14; Rom. 6:10). Sin in the flesh is the impulse to transgress, and by definition it can have no existence in a dead body. Thus it is testified: “he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7). And so it was that in the loving obedience of our Lord in laying down his life sin was finally overcome and destroyed, the serpent’s head was crushed by one whose walk in life was momentarily interrupted by a bruising to the heel (Gen. 3:15), and the greatest enemy of all mankind was finally extinguished in death.

We saw that “he that is dead is freed from sin”, because in death there is no thought, no impulse to sin, but total cessation of being. But, unlike all other men, who remain in the grave because they are worthy of death as transgressors, the Lord Jesus did no works of sin and was therefore unworthy of its wages. He was unworthy to die, but died nevertheless. As a son of Adam, having “the sentence of death” within himself (2 Cor. 1:9), he died as the representative of all those who would find life in him. But being unworthy of death he had to be raised. As Peter was inspired to say concerning him: “. . . whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because *it was not possible* that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24).

Having been raised from the dead, the Lord was granted a sinless, immortal nature, a “glorious” body (Phil. 3:21). Having suffered in the mortal weakness of sinful flesh he was made pure and undefiled in nature. As the Apostle Paul said: “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he *died unto sin* once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (Rom. 6:9,10).

Our representative

So then, as we saw in the previous study, the Lord Jesus was cleansed from sin by his own sacrifice (Heb. 9:23; 7:27). Before he died he had “sin in the flesh”; after his resurrection he was given immortality, having “ceased from sin”. But even though the Lord himself needed to be so cleansed, the whole purpose of it was that it might be for us. The Lord Jesus “died unto sin” in order that he might appear before God as our representative: “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God *for us*” (Heb. 9:24).

The Lord Jesus appears in the presence of the Almighty as the representative of those who are under the bondage of sin yet who seek forgiveness and reconciliation. As the Almighty beholds the people’s representative He sees one who is free from sin, who is holy and undefiled. He beholds only righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, which is in fact God’s own righteousness as declared by him, and not the sins of the people whom he represents. Christ is able to be our representative, for he was one of us, who laboured under the dominion of death (Rom. 6:9), who was a partaker of the infirmities of our nature. Yet he is able to appear before God on our behalf because he overcame that nature and can stand before God free from sin.

The way of salvation

This, then, is how we can find salvation: by identification with Christ, the one who appears in the presence of God for us. Through no fault of our own we are born into the family of Adam, who have the *diabolos* as their father. But if we receive the Word of God and allow it to work in our members it will create in us a desire to please God, and it will transform our hearts from darkness into light (2 Cor. 4:6). If we believe the things testified concerning the Lord Jesus, through baptism we can become part of a new family, the family of Christ, with the Most High as our Father. We declare war on sin, and resolve that we will use the power placed at our disposal to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Through the gospel believed and acted upon in baptism we discard the old, natural way of thinking as filthy rags. We “put off the old man with his deeds; and . . . put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge *after the image of Him That created him*” (Col. 3:9,10). Through the power of God and the victory of Christ we can ultimately succeed where Adam failed. Through identification with the sacrifice of Christ we receive forgiveness of sins, and through the absorption of the Word into our minds we become “renewed in knowledge” and therefore morally and mentally begin to reflect the likeness of our heavenly Father.

Yet this is but the beginning of the work; we need to undergo a change of nature as well as a change of mind. The *diabolos* must be destroyed in us also. And this will be so, for in the day of our Lord’s return, as the Apostle Paul declared, “He Which hath begun a good work in you will finish it” (Phil. 1:6, mg.). And again we read: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God ... but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him-*, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jno. 3:2).

That is, we shall truly be in His image and likeness, for when Christ shall appear, as the manifestation of God, he will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21), as “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54).

As we yearn for that great day to come, let us resolve to fight mightily against the enemy within us, knowing that the victory is guaranteed. Let us confess our sins and learn to walk in the way of God, illuminated by the burning brightness of His Word, helping and encouraging each other along the way. For “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. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 Jno. 1:7-10).

Chris Maddocks

Reviews and correspondence relating to

“The Defilement of Human Nature and its Cleansing in Christ The Christadelphian Position Vindicated.”

Reviews by Eric Cave:

Editorial Note

In the four months June to September 1999, the “Testimony” magazine published a series of four articles written by Chris Maddocks entitled “Death and Life – the consequences of Adam’s sin and their removal in Christ.”

The Reviews by Eric Cave were first published in the Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letters, July to November 1999. After publication we had requests to see these reviews in booklet form especially as the original articles by Chris Maddocks are now available in a booklet with the changed title :-

**“The Defilement of Human Nature
and its Cleansing in Christ.
The Christadelphian Position Vindicated.”**

We leave readers to judge for themselves whether or not the Christadelphian position has indeed been vindicated as Chris Maddocks claims.

Preface

It is often overlooked that the first century preaching of the gospel was accomplished before any creeds or statements of faith existed. Even the New Testament was not completed until circa AD 96, long after the apostles had “turned the World upside down.”

Perhaps it is no coincidence that when John Thomas resuscitated so much of ‘true’ Christianity last century, sadly with one conspicuous blunder which led to many minor contradictions, he never envisaged the formation of an organization of his followers such as we see today. His successor Robert Roberts, wrote in “The Christadelphian” shortly before his own death:

“Our present system (democracy) was disapproved of by John Thomas... I erred from too great confidence in human nature on the side of too great conformity to the republican spirit of the age. Experience has proved John Thomas right in the matter, and my own views crude and unsuitable. An electoral system that reduces our ecclesias, as it does, to the level of a political constituency or a money club, ought to be modified in harmony with the divine model of the first century as far as we can.”

But it was too late, the original Christadelphian organism had degenerated to an organization which had already developed a life of its own requiring the rules and regulations specifying what its members should believe and teach. In response to his first English tour John Thomas published “Elpis Israel” in 1850, he died in 1871. Robert Roberts took charge and formulated the rules. Misunderstanding and ignoring inconvenient Scripture he became obsessed with the doctor’s error that all men, including Jesus, must be unclean because they are born of women, and that common or natural death is the reward of sinning.

Believing himself to be the only man capable of understanding the Word he reverted to the Platonic theory of Christendom that subsequent to the Edenic transgression we all inherit ‘Original Sin’ (Compare what is now clause 5 of the B.A.S.F. with article 9 of the 39 articles of the Anglican communion) and decided that because God had given Adam a law which forbade the man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, then:

“Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality and sentenced to return to the ground from which he was taken - a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being and was transmitted to all his posterity” (Clause 5, B.A.S.F.).

This definition clearly implies that because Adam sinned, whilst in his ‘very good’ nature, then God planted in his flesh a ‘bias to sin’ which made him (and us) ‘very bad.’ And so he was made to sin further and was punished for breaking a law which God had made impossible to keep, i.e. a ‘devil’ implanted in us prompts us to sin - according to Robert Roberts.

The results were predictable; the meetings split and many drifted back to their former churches and chapels dismayed at the contentious and divided state of Christadelphia. But the organization grew and prospered believing that the pronouncements of Robert Roberts accorded with Scripture, despite the (still) persistent draining away of those who applied the Berean techniques to the so-called “Truth literature and pronouncements.” Ask any ‘establishment’ brother why God should WANT to implant a bias to sin in human flesh, when Adam could quite competently sin whilst in his “very good” nature? You will be ignored, or referred to the works of the ‘pioneers,’ but you will never get an intelligent answer. Yet the truth

about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Gospel and until Christadelphians abandon ‘sinful flesh’ and ‘the condemned line of Abraham and David’ they can never hope to understand the Atonement.

Eric Cave

Reply to Christ Maddocks article entitled

“The Defilement of Human Nature and its Cleansing in Christ. The Christadelphian Position Vindicated.”

I have rarely read such a farrago of unwarranted generalizations than those that appear in “The Testimony” article for June 1999 under the above heading.

Chris Maddocks begins with what he terms “the culmination of 6000 years of man’s rebellion against God” when the truth is that as the majority of mankind throughout history have been ignorant of the God of the Bible, they can hardly be said to have rebelled against Him. And of those men and that nation to whom God revealed Himself there were many, even at times the whole nation who obeyed their God and sought to do His will. Ezekiel in his 18th chapter makes it clear that God does not impute to the children the sins of their fathers. But regrettably Chris Maddocks does not seem able to distinguish the different ways in which the Bible uses the word “Sin” and chooses to believe in a man-made so called “Statement of faith” rather than the true teaching in the Word of God. When Adam sinned he placed himself in the position of a servant of Sin, King Sin, the devil, for “his servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey.” He forsook his position as a child of God and became a bond slave to ‘Sin’, an abstract conception and not a real entity, as was his Creator. But being a bond slave he and all his possessions, including his children and their progeny belonged to their new master ‘king sin’. This was their legal situation for which their only wages were ‘death’ another word which Chris Maddocks misunderstands, blinkered as he is by his faulty Statement of Faith and its assumption that because Adam in his “very good” nature chose to sin, then God implanted into his ‘flesh’ a principle which would cause Adam and all his progeny to do the same and continue to sin.

He quotes Paul in Romans 8:22 “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” apparently ignorant of the way in which the words “creation” or “creature” are used elsewhere by the apostle, when in 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Colossians 15:23, the Greek ‘*ktisis*’ can only mean ‘mankind’ as it also does in Mark 16:15. To conclude that in Romans it is used to denote all living creatures when the word is not so used elsewhere is an unwarranted generalization and certainly the saints in Rome, whether true or false, were far from groaning and travailing, the record shows that the false brethren were enthusiastically feasting with the licentious Romans and the true saints rejoicing in their new found salvation, even those who suffered for Christ’s sake “counted it all joy,” so where was the groaning and travailing except in the minds of the few righteous who like Lot vexed their righteous souls at the deeds of their neighbours?

Chris Maddocks claims in this first section that:

“the consequences of Adam’s offence affected the whole of creation, not just man, for we read cursed is the ground for thy sake... thorns and thistles shall it bring forth...”

If that generalization were true, how is it that the spies needed two men and a pole to carry one bunch of grapes from the land? Or why does Joel speak of the land being as the garden of Eden before the invader? Or why does God speak of the land as a land of milk and honey wherein the people would be blessed with the fruits of the womb and with corn and oil and wine? Or Jesus of the land of a certain rich man bringing forth plentifully? Common sense requires that just as those thorns and thistle would cause Adam to perspire and just as the land would fail to yield her increase to Cain, then those punishments for sin were personal to the ones who sinned and not universal as Chris Maddocks assumes. Did not God say in Genesis 8:21 that He would never again curse the ground for man’s sake? Even sillier is Chris Maddocks’ assumption that all the animals were cursed. If that generalization were true then God rewarded Job with a heap of curses when he

gave him 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 she asses. When the angels declared that “the man is become as one of us to know good and evil” Chris Maddocks must read it as “the man is become as one of us to know evil.”

Sadly such conclusions are only what we might expect to receive from a writer who has enthusiastically embraced the old Platonic ties concerning mankind, those notions of “original sin” so assiduously taught by Augustine when in the 3rd century he “married Christianity with Paganism” and fully accepted by the Roman church and all her harlot daughters - a lie firmly rejected by John Thomas and even by Robert Roberts himself until after the death of the former he performed his doctrinal somersault and cunningly introduced it as Clause 5 of his unnecessary Statement of Faith.

To continue with Chris Maddocks’ second section headed “**Adam Before The Fall**” extending his assertions that Adam’s transgression had a profound effect on all creation and that a process of decay hitherto unknown began to bring ‘death’ as its end product. Elsewhere Chris Maddocks quotes from an article written by John Thomas in 1855 on the subject, which he must have read without understanding the opening premise of its author which reads:-

“Moses tells us that when the terrestrial system was completed on the sixth day, that God reviewed all that he had made, and pronounced it ‘very good.’ But in what sense was it ‘very good’? In an animal and physical sense; for it was a natural and animal system, not a spiritual one. Such a system is essentially one of waste and reproduction and was organized with reference to what God knew would come to pass.”

This system operated from the very beginning: it was a very good system inasmuch as what John Thomas terms “waste and reproduction” provided the essential food for all those living creatures classified as omnivores and carnivores and without which the balances of creation could not have been maintained and without which many species of life could not have obeyed that first commandment to “be fruitful and multiply.” And there is no hint in the Bible that it was not “up and running before Adam sinned.” Only the tunnel vision of those who have been deceived by Clause 5 requires a rejection of that simple truth.

It is in this section that Chris Maddocks quotes from Elpis Israel and the strange conclusion of John Thomas that God created Adam with a “very good” nature which was capable of death and capable of endless life which could “merge into mortality or by a physical change be clothed with immortality - apparently because he thought that Adam was in an “intermediary state” (C. Maddocks words) which scarcely agrees with what he wrote in 1855 that Adam was created as part of a “natural and animal system” unless at that earlier time the doctor believed that the animals were also in that state of limbo. How much simpler to believe what the editor of the Christadelphian wrote in March 1969 in his editorial when he quotes from the more mature writings of John Thomas in Eureka where he says:

“Seeing that man had become a transgressor of the divine law, there was no need for a miracle for the infliction of death. All that was necessary was to prevent him eating of the Tree of Lives, and to leave his flesh and blood nature to the operation of the laws peculiar to it.” (L.G.Sargent).

As the editor points out the important facts to be gleaned are that –

“there was no need of a miraculous change to bring death, the man had merely to be left to the working of his animal nature.”

It was of that physical animal nature that John Thomas had said in Elpis Israel that “Death and corruption then, with reproduction... is the fundamental law of the physical system of the Six Days.”

If then Adam’s natural physical body was subject to death and corruption then stripped of the rhetoric all that John Thomas is telling us is that Adam’s nature is just the same as ours. There was no miraculous change from an imaginary intermediate limbo to that mortal state common to every creature. But of course if one is obsessed with the idea that “very good” means “not subject to death” and that after his transgression God miraculously implanted corruptibility and a bias to sin within Adam and ensured that was genetically transmissible forever, then there are problems which only the Word of God rightly divided can solve. Sadly

Chris Maddocks suffers from the delusion that as he reveals in this section it is the B.A.S.F. which must be upheld rather than the Scripture, hence the “What if” suppositions in the remainder of this section.

Under “**Mental Change**” C, Maddocks says we need

“to reflect upon the changed circumstances brought about by sin” and claims that this consisted of

“looking upon each other’s nakedness in a carnal way” having previously

“only fulfilled their desires in legitimate ways”! and “consequent to eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they had the capacity to satisfy their lusts unlawfully and this they duly did.”

When? And where is it recorded? This is purely the imagination of Chris Maddocks’ mind. And again,

“Having embraced the mind of the serpent they naturally sought out that which was evil”!

Absolute rubbish unknown to the Word of God. When did Adam sin again? The Bible is silent. Did he teach Abel to sin? Was not the serpent also created “very good”? When has nakedness between husband and wife been evil? Were they not created to be fruitful and multiply? I suggest that Chris Maddocks should read Genesis again and retract such nonsense.

This writer claims no infallibility such as Chris Maddocks claims for the B.A.S.F., but would suggest that the idea of a mental change is foreign to Scripture and that Adam who was not deceived, would recognize when he realized that Eve had eaten of the forbidden tree that because God had said “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” then Eve was due to die THAT DAY. (Genesis 3:3 proves that Adam had instructed her) and Adam loved his bride, as does Jesus; He therefore could not bear the thought of being parted from “flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone” and consequently partook of the fruit also if by any chance his death might substitute for Eve’s. Had God carried out His law they would both have perished and there would have been no human race to inhabit the earth, but “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13) and God accepted the lamb(s) blood as a substitute for that of the guilty pair.

The next section is headed “Physical Change” and continues the same mentally inept generalizations as before. Constrained by Robert Roberts doctrine he invents the peculiar theory that because Adam’s nature was not changed (which is what Clause 5 implies by the supposed implantation of the sin principle) then it was the “condition” of that nature which must have changed; a theory which he seeks to justify in this next section.

Chris Maddocks begins this section with the statement that

“Adam’s nature was not changed, the nature was the same, it was the condition of that nature that altered”

and men seeks to justify his fantasy by quotations from John Thomas and R. Roberts which to any normal intelligent reader actually do no such thing and confirm that the only change which occurred was a change in Adam’s relationship with his Creator and even specifically deny any physical change and I quote: -

“What was the difference between his (Adam’s) position before disobedience and his position after? Simply this, that in one case he was a living soul or natural body on probation for immortality; and in the other, he was a living soul or natural body under sentence of death. He was a living soul or natural body in both cases.”

And then comes the most amazing Alice in Wonderland contention of all, and how it got past the magazine editor’s scrutiny is inexplicable - I quote:-

“But although there was no new entity infused into the nature of man to make him become mortal (so what price Clause 5?) there was a distinct physical difference between Adam before the fall and Adam afterwards. The nature was the same, as Robert Roberts shows, but the condition of that nature was dramatically changed. If we were to analyse Adam before and after the fall under a microscope the difference we would see is a principle of decay at work, we would see cells dying. That is, we would see the inworking of death, a process commenced because of disobedience.”

How on earth does the mind of Chris Maddocks work? So Adam had no dying cells before he sinned! So God created him without hair, or finger nails or toe nails or even any outer skin. What a peculiar creature he must have been, unable to sneeze or moisten his lips, incapable of shedding a tear, incapable of even movement in case he activated his body fluids. Surely Chris Maddocks should know that there can be no life without death. To what amazing contradictions can idolatry of a false thesis take the human brain.

Chris Maddocks final section is headed “**Essential Principles**” and his first paragraph rightly declares that “Unless we can understand what it is that we are saved from, we will not understand how, or why we need salvation.” What a pity he puts his faith in a man made concoction by Robert Roberts who did so much good and yet so much harm. A man who looked upon himself as the conscience of the brotherhood; he alone decided what it should believe and anyone who disagreed was branded as a heretic. Far better to listen to what the apostle Peter had to say, a man divinely inspired who had the keys of the Kingdom on behalf of his and our Saviour and who clearly states what we are saved from and how that salvation was accomplished, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (manner of life) received by tradition (i.e. handed down) from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

I can only conclude this critique with the prayer that Chris Maddocks should cease to try and defend the indefensible and read his Bible without the blinkers of those preconceived ideas which render his writings so puerile.

Eric Cave.

Further to the foregoing commentary Eric Cave wrote the following Review of Chris Maddocks article and sent it to Tony Benson, Editor of “The Testimony” magazine:-

May I correct some of the inaccuracies and unwarranted generalisations in the article by Chris Maddocks in the June “Testimony”?

He begins with what he terms the “culmination of 6,000 years of man’s rebellion against God” when in fact the majority of mankind throughout history have been ignorant of the God of Israel and therefore can hardly have rebelled against him. And of those men and that nation to whom He revealed Himself, there have been many, and even the whole nation at times, who obeyed God and merited the terms righteous, obedient and blameless, as they sought to do His will. Ezekiel in his 18th chapter makes it plain that God does not impute to the children the sins of their parents.

He appears to have misunderstood Romans 8:22 by making the Greek “*ktisis*” refer to the whole natural world which God created, whereas the New Testament always uses it in relation to ‘mankind.’ Vine says “It is a significant confirmation of Romans 1:20,21 (“For the invisible things of him from the creation (*ktisis*) of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they (the Jews) knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination (Cp. 1 Peter 1:18,19) and their foolish heart was darkened”) that in all nonchristian literature these words are never used by Greeks to convey the idea of a creator or of a creative act by any of their gods. The words are confined by them to the acts of human beings.”

This restriction of ‘*ktisis*’ to those who knew the truth and against whom God reveals His wrath is well argued in chapter 6 of “Romans in the Light of John’s Gospel.” But C. Maddocks claims that “the consequences of Adam’s offence affected the whole of creation, not just man, for we read “cursed is the

ground for thy sake... thorns and thistles shall it bring forth.” If that generalization were to carry such a meaning how is it that the spies needed two men and a pole to carry one bunch of grapes, or why does God speak of the land as a land of milk and honey wherein die people would be blessed with the fruits of the womb in man and beast as well as corn, wine and oil? Or Joel say that the land was as the garden of Eden before the invader? Surely common sense requires that as the thorns and thistles would cause Adam to perspire and the land fail to yield her increase for Cain, then those punishments were individual to Adam and to Cain for their sins and not universal as C. Maddocks imagines. Even stranger is his contention that God cursed all animals because of Adam’s sin! Did He reward the perfect and upright Job with all those thousands of cursed animals when he gave him 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 she asses? I trow not.

Chris Maddocks is heading in the wrong direction when he declares that following Adam’s sin “A process of decay hitherto unknown began to bring ‘death’ as its end product.” John Thomas disagrees and wrote in 1855:-

“Moses tells us that when the terrestrial system was completed on the sixth day, that God reviewed all that He had made and pronounced it ‘very good,’ but in what sense was it ‘very good’? In a natural and physical sense; for it was an animal and physical system, not a spiritual one. Such a system is essentially one of waste and reproduction and was organized with reference to what God knew would come to pass,” (“Herald of the Kingdom” - July 1855).

John Thomas also said:-

“Seeing that man had become a transgressor of divine law there was no need for a miracle for the infliction of death: all that was necessary was to prevent him eating of the tree of lives and to leave his flesh and blood nature to the operation of the laws peculiar to it.” (Eureka, Volume 1, pp 210,211, 1869 Edition).

L.G.Sargent, commenting on this later writing of the doctor said in an editorial,

“There was no need of a miraculous change to bring death: the man had merely to be left to the working of his animal nature.” (“The Christadelphian” - March 1969).

John Thomas calls the creation of our terrestrial system one of “waste and reproduction” and so it always has been; far more seeds and eggs and births are produced than are needed to maintain any species, but it was a ‘very good’ system inasmuch as the surplus production provided the essential sustenance for the omnivorous and carnivorous species which Job reminds us were created in the beginning when all the sons of God shouted for joy and which was unquestionably functioning perfectly before Adam sinned. As the doctor claimed it was part of the fundamental law of the physical system of the six days.

Chris Maddocks declares that “We need to reflect upon the changed circumstances brought about by sin” which he declares for Adam and Eve consisted of “looking upon each others nakedness in a carnal way” having previously “only fulfilled their desires in legitimate ways” and “Consequent to eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they had the capacity to satisfy their lusts unlawfully and this they duly did.”

But when and where is the evidence for such speculation? C. Maddocks claims that “having embraced the mind of the serpent they naturally sought out that which was evil” - again no evidence is offered. When are we told that Adam continued to sin? Did Adam teach Abel to sin? Was not the serpent also created “very good”? Since when has nakedness between husband and wife been evil? How could the only man and woman in the world fulfil their physical desire for each other in “an illegitimate way”? Scripture tells us that God said **IN THE DAY** thou eatest of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil **THOU SHALT SURELY DIE** (dying thou shall die) and the use of the infinitive absolute, the doubling of the Hebrew, confirms the certainty that **IN THAT DAY** Eve was worthy of death, yet the only death recorded in Scripture was that of the Sacrificial lamb(s) for “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13) and God accepted the blood of an innocent animal as a substitute and temporary covering of their sin; whose skins provided a daily reminder to the guilty pair that the covering was only temporary and surely Adam, who was “not deceived” yet loved Eve even as Jesus loved His Bride, and could not bear the thought of being separated from his

helpmeet, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh therefore took also of the fruit of the tree that he might share her punishment, whatever it might be. Life without his lovely bride was unbearable. Had God carried out His law there would have been no human race to inhabit and multiply hence Adam and Eve were allowed to live out their natural span (930 years) when “mercy rejoiced against judgment.”

Presumably it was to support his speculations that Chris Maddocks invents the idea that whilst acknowledging that there was no change in the nature of the man and the woman it was the “condition” of that animal nature that altered! - and claims that

“If we were to analyse Adam before and after the fall under a microscope the difference we would see is a principle of decay at work. We would see cells dying. That is, we would see the inworking of death, a process commenced because of disobedience.”

What a peculiar creature God created. A man without hair or nails or outer skin, unable to move or breathe lest he activate his body liquids, unable to moisten his lips or blink his eye. Surely Chris Maddocks is aware that even the cells of a foetus in the womb divide and perish and our outer skin, our epidermis consists of dead cells waiting to be shed as is also the case with hair and nails etc- Was the editor ‘nodding’ when he allowed such nonsense to be printed in the Testimony?

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C.E.Cave.

Tony Benson’s first reply to Eric Cave, dated 30th July 1999:

Thank you for your letter... I think you have raised some significant points regarding what Chris Maddocks has said, though I don’t think there are any proven inaccuracies in the article that call for correction. Now that you have rejected part of the Statement of Faith, thereby rendering it necessary for you to be disfellowshipped, I’m not in a position to publish a letter from you, especially on matters relating to the aspect of the Statement of Faith that you no longer accept...

I have not received any other letters about the article. There are three more, the first of which you’ve probably seen by now. No doubt you will have further points of disagreement as the series progresses.

At the end of the series I may decide to review some aspects of it in an article, taking into account the points you made and others received.

May I also say that I very much regret that your thinking of the subject has gone along the lines that it has and hope you will yet reflect farther and withdraw from your present position.

Sincerely your brother in Christ,

Tony Benson.

A Review of Chris Maddocks’ second article: -

Thank you for your reply to my criticism of the first article by Chris Maddocks and your acknowledgement that I have “Raised some significant points which need to be taken into account.”

I trust you will indeed “take these into account” because it is on the basis of false premises that “the consequences of Adam’s sin affected the whole of creation, and not just man” and that “A process of decay, hitherto unknown, began to bring death as its end product” that Chris Maddocks builds all his false conclusions in this second article.

His opening paragraph declares “Adam was formed in a ‘very good’ state (correct) and was therefore free from any form of defilement (correct) or decay (false).” Decay, or corruption was fundamental to the animal and natural system which God created as John Thomas and all believers understood from 1850 until after the death of the doctor (and many continued to believe, and still do). I quoted Lou Sargent, in March

1969, "There was no need of a miraculous change to bring death; the man had merely to be left to the working of his animal nature" and (here are many such admissions in Christadelphian literature.

Chris Maddocks says "We demonstrated that he (Adam) was not created a dying creature" - but he hasn't, it is a false supposition. The death that God decreed as the penalty if Adam disobeyed his law had nothing to do with the common or natural death of all living creatures as the end of their eco cycle, or as Moses confirms in Numbers 16:29, by visitation of famine, and Ezekiel 14, wild beasts, sword or pestilence. The death decreed as the penalty for breaking God's Law was a legal, judicial, violent taking away of human life as even Robert Roberts subsequently admitted and wrote "It was typical of a violent manner of death."

I quote from a former Christadelphian: -

"This is put beyond any question by the rite of clothing the man with the skin of the victim, signifying that the death of the animal sacrificed was the death from which he had been delivered. He died in a legal sense when he transgressed the commandment: he was legally restored to life, after confession and repentance, with the life of the sacrifice. This principle is defined in connection with the prohibition of eating flesh with the blood. "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Thus when Paul says "By man came death" he is speaking in what may be called a doctrinal sense, of the death that really matters; that sentence which "passes upon" all men when they become responsible sinners, and which will be executed upon such as remain under condemnation when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed in the second death.

That this is correct is proved by the fact that the condemnation can be individually removed or remitted by faith and obedience - "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" and Paul confirms his Lord with "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." If the Christadelphian supposition that the condemnation resulting from sin was 'natural death' then those "in Christ" are still under condemnation, for they are still corruptible and dying, and so both Jesus and Paul are contradicted.

If 'death' in scripture is always the common or natural death, then Christ's words are falsified, because he says that believers have passed from death into life." This is not 'prolepsis' (speaking of the future as though it were the present). Jesus is speaking of a death-state and a life-state which exists independently of our physical life or death.

Paul says "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." His use of the words "passed upon" implies that he is dealing with something in the nature of a law or of a sentence. Our natural death, what Moses calls the common death of all men, is not a sentence or a law passed upon us - we are corruptible and dying because we were so created as John Thomas declared (but which Chris Maddocks and the Statement of Faith deny).

"The wages of sin is death." If this does indeed mean natural death, then God is unjust, because those wages are paid to good and bad alike, saints and sinners. Furthermore an additional payment is required of the wicked - "the second death." Even human law does not punish a man twice for the same crime. Is God less just?"

I find it astonishing that Chris Maddocks is allowed three pages of the Testimony to prove that God does not mean what He has plainly said in Genesis. "Nowhere in scripture" says Chris Maddocks "are we told that Adam actually ate of the tree of life." Neither are we told that he didn't and the Hebrew "Eating thou shalt eat" carries the same certainty as "dying thou shalt die" as John Adey in his analysis of Genesis 3:22 published in the "New Bible Student," Sept/Nov- 1998, and Alan and Margaret Fowler in "Exploring Bible Language" have declared. The use of the infinitive absolute in Genesis 2:16 implies 'surely,' 'without doubt,' 'certainly' just as it does in 2:17.

Chris Maddocks says "The tree of life was not formed for Adam to feed upon either" - so why didn't God put a prohibition upon it? How does he know it was not for eating? Chris Maddocks says "God

allowed Adam to eat of any food bearing tree, but this did not include the tree of life or the Tree of knowledge of good and evil” - so why did God thrust out the man from the garden lest he eat of it? Why does Chris Maddocks himself say in the next column “had Adam overcome he also would have been permitted to eat from the tree as a reward for his faithfulness”? Why does Chris Maddocks go to such wresting of the Word to defend the indefensible when clearly the tree of life was on ‘open access and its existence the only intimation we have of the means by which God maintained Adam and Eve as mature non ageing mortals to fulfil the express command to dress and till the garden?

God had said “IN THE DAY thou eatest of it (the tree of knowledge of good and evil) dying thou shalt die” - Oh no, says C. Maddocks, God meant to say “After 930 years thou shalt die” - all because he fails to understand, or refuses to accept that John Thomas was wrong in supposing that eating of the tree of life would confer immortality.

What sort of exposition is it that adds to scripture and claims that Adam was not permitted to eat of the tree of life when God had said “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” (Except the one forbidden tree)?

I await with sadness the next episode in this series.

Eric Cave.

Tony Benson’s second letter to Eric Cave, dated 17th August 1999:-

Dear Brother Eric, Thank you for your letter (30th July), not received until 14th (August). I have still received no communication on the series except yours.

You have a long quotation in it from an unidentified ‘former Christadelphian’ but you do not say whether he wrote it when he was a Christadelphian or after he ceased to be one. Nor is the source of the quotation identified.

If you look at my previous letter again, you will see that I did not make the statement which you quote me in your latest letter as making. I hope you will be more careful in future.

Your letter contains a brief quote from Robert Roberts for which no source is given. Unless this can be considered in the context in which it was made it is not very useful,

I will add your letter to the previous one and consider them again when the series is ended.

Your sincerely in Christ Jesus;

Tony (Benson)

Eric Cave to Tony Benson, 3rd September 1999:-

I am a little puzzled at the statement in your acknowledgement of my protest against the second article by C.M.Maddocks where you say that I have misquoted your comments in your previous communication of July 27th.

You said in that letter “I think you have raised some significant points regarding what C. Maddocks has said” and in the third paragraph of that letter you say “At the end of the series I may decide to review some aspects of it in an article taking into account the points you made, and others received” .

My response was to refer to your acknowledgement that “I have raised some significant points which need to be taken into account” which would have been better put as “which may be taken into account” for which slightly pedantic error I apologize, and to repeat the object of the paragraph that I hope you will take my significant points into account. As far as the quotation from Robert Roberts is concerned I think it was during his debate with J.J.Andrew but will try and confirm. However Brother Fry in “Echoes of Past Controversies” certainly said the same thing.

Herewith my protests against the third article by Chris Maddocks.

With love in Jesus our Redeemer and Saviour.

Eric Cave.

Eric Cave's Review of Chris Maddocks' third article: -

So now the secret is out, the mystery has been solved. All is clear. When Paul wrote in Romans 4:15 "Where there is no law there is no transgression" and when he wrote in Romans 5:13 "But sin is not imputed where there is no law" then he must have been deceiving us because on the authority of C. Maddocks sin is an inherited factor in all flesh, Paul must have been lying.

Equally Jesus has deceived us when He said "Except I had come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they say, we see; therefore their sin remaineth." And again, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light." If sin is in the flesh how could Jesus say they would not have had it at all except He had come and spoken to them? Was Jesus also lying?

What the Bible teaches is that only those who are under the law are scripturally sinners. To claim as C. Maddocks does that "Just as we inherit death so we inherit sin" is a clear contradiction of what God is telling us and only if he rids himself of the damnable doctrine of physical condemnation can he hope to understand the clear and simple doctrine of atonement. If the condemnation is physical the coming of light into the world could neither add to it nor remove it. But if the condemnation is as Paul teaches a 'legal enactment' by which Adam sold himself and all his progeny in his loins to the bondage of 'Sin' or 'the Diabolos' then this legal enactment passed upon, or hangs over all the human race, but only becomes operative upon those, and only those, amenable to it because they know of it. Then it opens up a conception of God's purpose at once meeting the facts and satisfying the mind.

Paul says "Without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once (before his Bar mitzvah) but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died (figuratively)." Until Paul had been baptized into Christ and therefore delivered from the state of bondage under Adam to the state of freedom in Christ he was not able to declare "There is NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now in the year of our Lord AD 33/4 those who had been baptized into the Name of Jesus Christ had that legal condemnation of bondage to Sin removed and became Christ's FREE men and women.

I warned in my previous protests where the false premises of C. Maddocks would lead your readers. Consider some of the confusing contradictory passages in this third instalment:

Page 299 - C. Maddocks says death is the wages of sin and was not therefore inherently in Adam from creation, and follows it up with the statement that it passed upon all men which does prove it to be an hereditary condition and concludes his first section with the assertion that the dissolution of our entire being into dust is the culmination of the "death" (presumably because of sin) we physically inherit from Adam. Yet as I pointed out in my critique of his first article John Thomas, Robert Roberts and all Christadelphians preached and understood at least for the first 25 years of their preaching that there was no change in the nature of Adam when he sinned.

Under the heading, "**The Law of Sin and Death**," C. Maddocks asserts,

"As a consequence of Adam's offence, all his progeny are born into a state of affairs whereby it is inevitable that they also become sinners, since they inherit his sinful nature."

John Thomas knew better and wrote in "The Ambassador," August 1869, page 216: "Our flesh is constitutionally no worse than Adam's flesh before the fall." Chris Maddocks also states in that section, "It is a principle of scripture that God rightly requires that all who share Adam's sinful nature be condemned to the grave," but offers no scriptural proof of that silly supposition. Perhaps he should read 1 Corinthians 15:51 "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For

this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality... O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

But I have forgotten C. Maddocks knows better than Paul and his oracle has brain washed him to assert "We have a nature which is physically defiled by sin in the sight of God, a NATURE which is under condemnation." Strange that God created that nature and Jesus shared it.

Under the heading, "**Defiled by sin**" C. Maddocks declares, "The truth of the matter is that wicked works such as those the Lord enumerates come from submitting ourselves to the law of sin," which was true enough of our situation as well as Paul's before he put on Christ and the diabolos fled from us, but then asserts the weary old lie 'We have something which the Lord views as 'uncleanness' within us, for our flesh is hereditarily defiled.'" Obviously for C. Maddocks his baptism merely released him from the consequences of his own former sins and the sacrifice of Christ was not as 1 John 2:2 tells us for the sins of the whole world, to release the faithful from the bondage of slavery to King Sin into which Adam's transgression caused all in his loins to legally belong, for his servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey.

Under the heading, "**Unclean from Birth**":- The same false premise expresses itself in the silly conclusion that children are unclean because they have "the law of sin and death within them," but fails to explain why Paul could assert in 1 Corinthians 7:14 "The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy," or even why Peter should say in Acts 10:28, "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Nor does his quotation from Job help his false doctrine for when Job says "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" the Hebrew word so rendered only refers to those ceremonial and temporary conditions occasioned by issues or contact with unclean animals or food, etc. The uncleanness of which Job speaks has nothing to do with the moral relationship which transgression of God's Law brought about. The poverty of C. Maddocks understanding of the divine word is clearly demonstrated in this section by his tearing out of context the phrase in the Psalm 58, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born speaking lies" and seeking to claim as literal that which is to any of normal intelligence a figurative passage. Did C. Maddocks or any man that ever lived witness a new born babe "speak lies"? Let him read vv 4 and 5 and hang his head in shame at such misuse of the Spirit Word. How dare he entitle his next section "The power of the Word" when he so demeans it?

Under the heading, "**The Power of The Word**":- More contradictions, more untruths. We now have serpent minds within us which even the powerful influence of the Scripture to assist us we cannot overcome! Even Paul was drawn captive by sin, the innate impulses to disobey are too strong for us; we are without strength to save ourselves from sin! Obviously C. Maddocks has never read Paul's testimony that "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 US FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH."

Once again obsession with his oracle requires him to deny the Word and in effect accuse Paul of lying. And not only Paul but John also in his first epistle asserts that "If we walk in the light (of God's revelation)... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN" and lest we should doubt this scriptural Truth applies it to little children, fathers and young men because the darkness has passed and the true light now shineth. But the power of the Word can have little effect on those who deny the present tense in which the Apostles write and are required by tradition to push all the wonder of salvation into the future.

Under the heading, "**The Lesson from The Law**":- Here again unsound exposition deriving from obsession with condemned and unclean flesh and an inability to recognize when the records must be understood metaphorically leads C. Maddocks to ignore the difference between the two Hebrew words *tahor* and *Zakah*. The one relating to ceremonial uncleanness from which a man was cleansed at eventide after the appropriate washings or which prevented specified animals from being acceptable sacrifices or food, and the other that moral alienation of mind and heart from fleshly as opposed to spiritual attitudes. But to speak of "the disease of sin" is mere rhetoric when the facts are so plain- The voluntary offering of the Lamb of God was not for Himself but for us, unlike the High Priest under the Mosaic Law Jesus needed not to offer for His own sins, for He had none. Were animals slain under the Law for their own sins? The Mosaic High Priest was not, and had nothing in common with the Melchizedec priest, Jesus came to redeem His people, not to

display the just reward of sinful flesh. His crucifixion was the greatest offence of wicked men as well as the supreme act of filial love to redeem Adam and his progeny from the bondage into which Adam had sold the human race.

Under the heading, **“Jesus Christ of our Natures”**:- More false premise. The adjective ‘sinful’ nowhere occurs in Romans chapter 8. C. Maddocks is fully aware of the fact that the phrase “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” should properly be rendered “God sending his own Son in the likeness of Sin’s flesh (or flesh of sin)” and all expositors have pointed out this error in the Authorized Version. C. Maddocks quite deliberately seeks to deceive us into believing in Original Sin rejected by the brotherhood until 1873. Jesus was made of a woman that he might share our Adamic very good nature and be tempted in all points like His brethren but He Himself was never ‘in Adam’. God was His Father and no man ever had two fathers. He was never in bondage as were and mostly still are the children descended from Adam. Had He been so He could never have been a sacrifice for us. Yet C. Maddocks obsession compels him to write of “the diabolos in Jesus” which to any sober unbiased reader amounts to blasphemy. How could God be in Jesus reconciling the world to Himself if the diabolos was in that ‘Holy thing’ born of Mary? Peter says that Jesus has redeemed us from our vain conversation (manner of life) RECEIVED BY TRADITION FROM OUR FATHERS (i.e. ‘handed down’ from our fathers) neither we nor our Saviour were born with any bias or tendency to transgress. We, but not Christ, acquire that tendency by association with the ‘world’ from our environment, and until C. Maddocks and others who follow the platonic lie of ‘sinful flesh’ and reject it, they will continue to deny and distort and twist the Spirit Word and ignore I Peter 1:18.

Under the heading, **“Christ’s overcoming of Sin”**:- More confusion. On page 299 C. Maddocks tells us that the law of sin and death is a principle of moral corruption we have within us. Now in this section he has decided that it is ‘physical’ and can never be removed until the transformation of nature at the judgment seat. “O what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.” He begins this malodorous muddle with an attempt to explain Hebrews 7:27 which in context reads “For such a high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens: who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s, for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”

Only one brainwashed to believe that Jesus was under the control of the ‘diabolos’ could fail to see that the whole of chapter 7 of Hebrews is contrasting the Melchizedec priesthood of Jesus with the priesthood under the Mosaic order, and not seeking parallels. But contexts have to be ignored when seeking to deceive and so Chris Maddocks asserts that Jesus had to offer for His own ‘sin nature.’

Scripture says:-

1. He died for our sins.
2. He died for our transgressions, our iniquities.
3. He gave His life for the sheep.
4. He was delivered for our offences.
5. He was sacrificed for us.
6. He tasted death for every man.
7. He suffered for us, the just for the unjust,

And these are but a few of the testimonies, and neither C. Maddocks nor any man can point to one verse in Scripture which testifies otherwise. Not one single verse tells us that Jesus Christ died for Himself or that He was included amongst those for whom He died, or that He Himself needed redemption, or that He was a constitutional sinner. The very verse preceding the one under consideration states that Jesus was holy, harmless UNDEFILED and separate from sinners. Daniel 9:26 is conclusive:- “And... Messiah shall he cut off, but not for himself”. To assert, as C. Maddocks does that Jesus “had the diabolos within himself” can be nothing less than blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Under the heading, **“Our Involvement in Christ’s Victory”**:- More lies. C. Maddocks writes,

“The cleansing work of the Lord Jesus was enacted under the Law by a sinner who did need a sacrifice for transgression. How appropriate then in the shadowy representation of the Law, for the sinner to be cleansed for his own sin first, in order that he might then fulfil his office for the people.”

How can “The Testimony” print such blasphemy? When did Jesus ever transgress? When did He ever sin? How can a sinless man be a sinner? How can one of whom the chapter itself records as being separate from sinners yet be numbered amongst sinners? Even under the Mosaic priesthood an unclean sacrifice was rejected. The writer to the Hebrews says the High Priests of that Law had infirmity, but the word of the oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son who is consecrated for evermore. What a mockery of the holy child of Mary undefiled and separate from sinners is now identified as a ‘sinner.’ Abraham Lincoln once said “You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” Sadly Chris Maddocks has fooled even himself

I write in sorrow,

Eric Cave.

Tony Benson’s third letter to Eric Cave, dated 10th September 1999:-

Dear Brother Eric, Thank you for... the letter commenting on the third of Chris Maddocks’ articles.

Regarding your ‘quotation’ from my earlier letter, you took some actual words from the earlier part of the letter, added to them an inaccurate summary of what I said in the later part of my letter and put it all in quotation marks as though it was one continuous quotation from what I actually said. As you seek to justify this in your letter it follows that I cannot be sure that anything which is presented by you as a quotation is in fact the actual words of the document quoted.

Shortly after your last letter Brother Maddocks sent me a copy of your comments which appeared in the Nazarene newsletter about his first article...

I am sending him a copy of your latest letter and will do so with anything you may send on his fourth and final article.

Your letters remain the only comments received from readers. Whether anything further will be published, and if so when (we may want to wait and see what the Nazarenes publish in later newsletters) remains to be decided.

Sincerely your brother in Christ,

Tony Benson.

Review of Chris Maddocks’ fourth article:-

This final letter on the subject of Brother Maddocks deplorable series is written in the spirit of love for all who have put on Christ in baptism however misguided they may be in their understanding of the nature of man and of Christ, as well as in the spirit of Isaiah 58 “Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”

Firstly then a quotation from Elpis Israel which you dare not print. Page 115 in earlier editions and page 128 in my 1973, 14th edition (my underlining):

“The apostle says, “Levi, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.” Upon the same federal principle all mankind ate of the forbidden fruit, being in the loins of Adam when he transgressed. This is the only way men by any possibility be guilty of original sin. Because they sinned in Adam therefore they return to the dust from which Adam came “in whom” (Greek ἐφ’ ᾧ), says the apostle, “all sinned” (margin rendering: see comments in Emphatic Diaglott). Mankind being born of the flesh, and of the will of man, are born into the world under the constitution of Sin. That is, they are the natural born citizens of Satan’s kingdom... There are two states or kingdoms in God’s arrangements, which are distinguished by constitution. These are the Kingdom of Satan, and the Kingdom of God. The citizens

of the former are all sinners, the heirs of the latter are saints. But men are not only MADE or constituted sinners, but they become sinners even as by actual transgression. Having attained the majority of their nature, they become accountable and responsible creatures. At this crisis, they may be placed by the divine arranging in a relation to His Word. It becomes to them a tree of life, inviting them to take and eat and “live for ever.” If however they prefer to eat of the world’s forbidden fruit, they come under the sentence of death in their own behalf. They are thus doubly condemned. They are condemned already to the dust as natural born sinners and secondarily condemned to a resurrection of judgment for rejecting the gospel of the Kingdom of God: by which they become obnoxious to the second death. (Note: John Thomas uses the word ‘obnoxious’ in its Victorian meaning of ‘liable to punishment’).”

This extract from the founder of the Christadelphian community is quite contrary (though sadly mixed up with the doctors misunderstanding of human nature) to what Chris Maddocks would have us believe. As I have claimed, for the first 25 years of the community both John Thomas and Robert Roberts believed and taught that the “law of sin and death” was that constitution into which Adam sold himself and all his progeny by transgression; that state of legal bondage, the “sin of the world” (1 John 2:2) from which men are unable to escape until the Lamb of God paid the price of the release of His brother Adam and his progeny from the bondage of King Sin by voluntarily offering Himself as a substitute. Indeed John Thomas referred to “the death of the substitutional testator” on page 213 of the original edition of *Elpis Israel*. But after the death of the doctor the text was tampered with and some miscreant at the Christadelphian Office deleted the words “substitutional testator” and replaced them with the single word “mediator” and as one observer said in 1957, “It seems likely that this alteration is of comparatively recent date: it was certainly not made in the doctors lifetime or with his consent and surely to remove words having a clear and precise meaning and replace them with another having a different meaning is nothing short of forgery. A footnote in “The Declaration” referring to the notorious Trinitarian fabrication in 1 John 5 says “It is evidently spurious... but by whom forged is of no great moment, as its design must be obvious to all”!

John Thomas further wrote on page 132 (14th edition):-

“As the constitution of sin hath its roots in the disobedience of the first Adam, so also hath the constitution of righteousness root in the obedience of the second Adam. Hence the apostle says, “As through one offence (sentence was pronounced) upon all men unto condemnation; so also through the righteousness (sentence was pronounced) upon all men (that is Jews and Gentiles) unto a Justification of life. For as through die disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners; so also through the obedience of the one the many shall be constituted righteous.” “The two Adams are two federal chiefs, the first being figurative of the second in these relations. All sinners are in the first Adam: and all the righteous in the second, only on a different principle. Sinners were in the loins of the first when he transgressed; but not in the loins of the latter when he was obedient unto death; therefore the flesh profiteth nothing. For sons of Adam to become Sons of God they must be subjects of an adoption which is only attainable by some divinely appointed means”

Perhaps Chris Maddocks would like to explain why, if Jesus was under Adamic condemnation, He would need adoption? Dare he claim that the only begotten Son needed adoption into His Father’s family?

The “divinely appointed means” ordained for sons of Adam to become Sons of God is of course by faith. The reward for faith replaced the reward for obedience when God accepted the blood of the lamb which pointed forward to Christ instead of and as a substitute for the blood of Adam, and Hebrews 11 lists the various aspects of faith by which righteousness is imputed to those who believe and obtain a “good report.”

Now let me quote from Robert Roberts’ writing in “The Ambassador” for March 1869:-

“SIN IN THE FLESH”. That phrase is metonymical. It is not the expression of a literal element, or principle pervading physical organisation. Literally, sin is disobedience, or an act of rebellion. The impulses which lead to this reside in the flesh, and metonymically came to be called by the name of the act to which they gave birth. In defining first principles, we must be accurate in our conceptions. The

impulses which lead to this existed in Adam before transgression as much as they did afterwards, else disobedience would not have occurred.” “There is no such thing as essential evil or sin.”

Robert Roberts also says on page 85, referring to David Handley, who had applied for baptism but was deemed deficient in understanding:

“Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatsoever, and the presumption and evidence are the contrary way. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation.”

That declaration by Robert Roberts exempts the Lamb of God from every curse, every defamation that Chris Maddocks and Clause 5 have thrown at Him. Jesus was neither sinner, or possessed by a diabolos. His flesh was as clean as Adam’s before his transgression and as the flesh of every babe born in the image of ‘*elohim*.’ What tempted Robert Roberts to renounce those beliefs? What prompted him to accept John Thomas’s false teaching that sin is a synonym for human nature is to be found in the events of 1873. Having previously had his own house swept and garnished he went out and returned with the seven devils of the B.A.S.F. since when Christadelphians have been faced with the impossible problem of reconciling a morally sinless Saviour with a physically condemned and defiled sacrifice, which could have redeemed no one.

I find it deplorable that a magazine which purports to exist for the study and defence of Holy Scripture should be more concerned for the study and defence of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith when it comes to the central facts of salvation. “Come let us reason together saith YHWH: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” ‘Not so,’ claim the leaders of the Christadelphian community. ‘Truth is to be found in the B.A.S.F., it was all reasoned out for us by our pioneers last century.’

I am eternally grateful to Eric Phipps who first provoked me into checking the brief piece which you published from me in the February 1997 Testimony and which resulted in the publishing of “The Divine Plan - re-appraisal of some Christadelphian Traditions” and even to Chris Maddocks whose delusions prompted the recent despatch of “It shall come to pass in the last days” to warn my friends of the scriptural consequences to which they are supposedly committed. Although as my correspondence over the last 12 months has proved, only a tiny minority are aware of that commitment. Even last month one well known second generation Christadelphian and valued speaker admitted to me that he had never even possessed a copy of the B.A.S.F. and had no idea what Clause 5 was about! “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Galatians 6:6), but surely not bad things which demean and dishonour and denigrate the Author of our salvation, which derive from that false Statement of Faith.

There is much more I would like to say on the subject, but as you intimated in your letter of July 21st “I’m not in a position to publish a letter from you” on account of my disfellowship so it would appear to be a waste of time and sadly, leave your readers unaware of the beauty and simplicity of the Atonement.

With love in Christ Jesus our Lord, Eric Cave.

We now reproduce Tony Benson’s Editorial for June 2000 in which he gives his summing up in relation to the articles of Chris Maddocks: -

“The Nature of man and the work of Christ - some passages considered”

In the past year or so the question of the correct interpretation of various passages of Scripture has cropped up in various items of correspondence received. These are all generally to do with sin, the nature of man and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in dealing with sin. Having been caused to think or rethink the meaning of these passages, I decided to write up my conclusions in the form of this article. The passages are

dealt with in the order of their occurrence in Scripture and not in relation to any particular piece of correspondence received. I have tried to deal with each one without any preconceived ideas as to what they mean, considering carefully each verse in its context.

Psalm 58:3. *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”* Is this speaking in general terms of mankind and therefore establishing the general principle of the innate wickedness of human nature? It appears not, for, “the wicked” here contrasts with “the righteous” later on in the Psalm (w. 10,11), and consists of David’s enemies. Moreover, verse 3 is not literally true, for new-born babes cannot speak either truth or lies. It surely refers to the fact that children brought up in a wicked environment themselves grow up to be wicked; wickedness comes out in their characters from the earliest age. Nevertheless, although David is not here making a general point about human nature, his words do support the idea that there is nothing good about human nature, otherwise sin would not come out so readily in those brought up in an evil environment.

Ezekiel 18:4,20 *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* Is this making a general statement about the human race? It does not appear so, for the following verses speak of one who does right, concluding with the words, “he is just, he shall surely live” (v.9). Likewise verse 21 says that if the wicked turns from his evil ways “he shall surely live, he shall not die.” Amongst the Jews there were those who were wicked in their ways, who would die eternally, and those who sought in faith to do God’s will who would live eternally. These verses are not parallel to Romans 6:23 (see below).

John 15:22 *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin”.* This verse is quoted to show that only those who have knowledge of God’s law are sinners. However, it is clearly not talking about this; the Jews to whom Christ referred certainly would have known the Law of Moses and would have broken it at some stage. The passage goes on to say; “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin” (v.24).

If the passage is establishing a general principle, then the principle would be that only those who actually heard Christ speak and saw his miracles are sinners - a conclusion which would mean, for example, that those who broke the Law in Old Testament times were not sinners. This is clearly wrong. The passage must be referring to the particular culpability of those who rejected Christ after hearing his preaching, backed up by miracles.

Romans 4:15 *“For the law worketh wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression”* (RV). Again this passage is quoted to show that only those under God’s law are sinners. However, this verse is not talking about sinning but transgressing, the breaking of the law. The two are not synonymous; to transgress means to break a commandment which you have knowledge of, and that is what the Greek word *parabasis* always means in the New Testament. Clearly people cannot break a law if there is no law to break.

Romans 5:13 *“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”* The second half of this verse is quoted for the same purpose as the two previous quotations, yet the whole verse proves the opposite, for the first part of the verse shows that sin was in the world prior to the giving of the Law of Moses.

People sin when their conduct is not in accordance with God’s standards of righteousness, whether they are aware of these standards or not. However, those who were not under God’s Law did not sin “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression” (v.14); they were not guilty of breaking laws that they knew about, in contrast to Adam, who did. The word translated “imputed” in verse 13 means ‘to lay to one’s charge,’ and must refer here to responsibility before God at the judgment seat. Those who live in ignorance of God’s laws are sinners but not transgressors, and are not accountable to God at the judgment seat.

Romans 5:19 *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous.”* The question here is. What is the significance of the word ‘made’?

The Greek word translated ‘made’ here is not one of the common words for ‘made.’ People are not literally made sinners by Adam’s disobedience, nor are they literally made righteous by Christ’s obedience. Those in Christ will ultimately become truly righteous beings, but this is not what the verse is talking about,

The word is *kathistemi*, and it literally means “to place, or set down, permanently.’ What the use of this word seems to indicate is that men and women are set down in a constitution or order of things in which sin is inevitable. This is primarily because all mankind has a weak, sin-prone nature inherited from Adam. Also, all have to grow up in an environment that is inherently sinful, in a world of sin where sin reigns supreme. Jesus, by his perfect obedience unto death, brought into being a new order of things in which righteousness is possible, because through him there is forgiveness of sins and the counting of people as righteous through faith.

Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* The question here is, Can the words, “the wages of sin is death” be applied to all mankind in general, or do they apply only to those who continue in sin after baptism? Are the wages of sin awarded specifically at the judgment seat to the unworthy, or does the phrase refer to the death that comes upon all mankind?

There is no doubt that the passage of which this is the conclusion is addressed to believers, who are being warned that if they continue in their old sinful ways after baptism they will die eternally. However, the sin of this passage is not solely sin which is committed after coming to a knowledge of the Truth, for the first verse of the chapter says: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” ‘Sin’ therefore exists prior to baptism; people sin when they do that which is not right before God, whether they are aware of it or not.

The phrase, “wages of sin,” is of course linked to the idea of being a servant of sin, which occurs right through Romans 6. Does the idea of being a servant to sin apply only to those who, having been baptized, live a sinful way of life, or are people the servants of sin before they are baptized? The latter is the case, for Paul says in verse 6 that at baptism “our old man was crucified with (Christ), that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin” (RV). Believers were servants of sin before baptism, are released from this at baptism, but if they continue in a sinful life go back to that bondage. Paul says the same thing in verse 17:

“God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” Believers were the servants of sin before their baptism.

The conclusion is that, since all sinners are the servants of sin, not just those who live sinful lives after baptism, the phrase “wages of sin” refers to the death that comes upon all men and women, and not to the additional condemnation placed upon those liable to judgment.

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.”* What does the phrase “likeness of sinful flesh” indicate here? Is the word “likeness” included to draw a distinction between Jesus and ourselves, that he was like us but not the same as us, or is it, there to indicate similarity between Jesus and ourselves? If it is the former then “likeness” indicates that Jesus, unlike us, did not sin. If the latter then “likeness” indicates that Jesus inherited the same tendency to sin that we have (though of course he always resisted it).

Both from the context and Scripture elsewhere, I believe the latter to be the case. In sending His Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” God “condemned sin in the flesh.” Sin had to be condemned in the place where it takes place, where it is committed, that is, in human flesh, “Sinful flesh,” or “flesh of sin” as the Greek literally means, therefore refers to human nature in which there is a natural pull towards sin. This was fully possessed by Jesus, but the pull towards sin was always resisted by him and so was condemned.

The same word is used of Jesus in Philippians 2:7, where it says that he was “made in the likeness of men.” Was Jesus actually man? Certainly he was. Was Jesus “sinful flesh”? Yes, but not in the sense of being a sinner, only in the sense of having a nature with a natural tendency towards sin which had to be overcome, and was overcome. Hebrews 2:17 says that Jesus was “in all things... made like unto his brethren,” and this includes having the nature which we bear, with its pull towards sin.

Romans 8:19-22 *“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”* The question here is, is “the creature” in this passage referring to the whole of the natural creation or just to the new creation in Christ?

The first point to note is that, though the AV has ‘creature’ in verses 19- 21 and ‘creation’ in verse 22, the Greek word *ktisis* is used in all cases. The word is used in the New Testament both of the natural creation in general (Mk. 10:6; 2 Pet. 3:4) and of the new creation of men and women in Christ, both collectively (Rev- 3:14) and of individuals (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal.6:15). Which meaning applies in this passage? Both the context and the wording of the passage indicate that Paul is talking here about the new creation.

The verses preceding the passage are talking about the children of God and in particular their sufferings (vv. 16-18). The passage we are looking at begins with the word “For” and surely therefore continues in that theme of the sufferings of the children of God in this present life. The “creature” or “creation” of these verses is therefore the new creation in Christ.

The wording of these verses is consistent with this. Verse 19 says that the creation “waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” This is not true of the creation in general or even of mankind in general. In verse 20 the creation is said to be “subjected” to “vanity” but “in hope.” It is believers in Christ who live in hope for the future (vv.24,25), not creation as a whole. Verse 21 speaks of the creation being “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” It is only believers in Christ who will be delivered from corruption to glorious liberty, freedom for ever from the bondage of sin and death.

When we consider verses 22 and 23 together, however, it looks at first sight as though the apostle is contrasting creation in general, “the whole creation,” with believers in particular. However, to whom does the phrase “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit” relate? Surely not to believers as a whole but to the Spirit-guided eldership of the ecclesias in the first century, of which Paul was part. The phrase “firstfruits of the Spirit” is the equivalent of “the earnest of the Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 1:22:5:5; that is, the foretaste of “powers of the world to come” (Heb.6:5). Paul is saying that those who possessed these miraculous powers in the first century, which will be possessed by all the saints in the Kingdom, still suffered the travail that comes as a result of Adam’s sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *“For He (God) made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* In what sense was Jesus “made, -, sin”? Does it refer to the fact that he had our sin-prone nature, or is there some other explanation?

To say that Jesus was made sin in the sense that he had our sin-prone nature does not seem to make much sense here. To say that Jesus was “made... sin... who knew no sin” indicates that he “knew no sin” before being “made... sin.” This would only be true if Jesus existed before his birth by Mary, which of course he did not. He was first born of our sin-prone nature, then overcame that nature, knowing no sin. We have to find an explanation of the verse that involves Jesus first knowing no sin and then being made sin.

One explanation sometimes given is that the word translated ‘sin’ here (*hamartia*) can mean ‘sin offering;’ Jesus, who committed no sin, was made the offering for our sins. *Hamartia* is the word used in the Septuagint for ‘sin offering,’ and probably carries this meaning in Romans 8:3, where the phrase “for sin” should probably be rendered “for a sin offering.”

Another explanation is that Jesus was made sin in the sense that he suffered death as though he were a sinner, whereas he was in fact sinless and did not deserve to die. This balances well with the rest of the verse, and overcomes the difficulty stated above regarding “sin” meaning “sin-prone human nature.” First he lived a sinless life, he did not know sin, then he suffered as though he was a sinner, in order that we, who are sinners might be made (counted or reckoned, as in Romans 4) righteous. In this interpretation, the verse balances out nicely, though it may seem to be stretching the meaning of “made... sin.”

Hebrews 2:14 *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* Does “the devil” here represent sin or the Jewish authorities who were responsible for killing Jesus? The word translated “destroy” here is *katargeo*, which means literally ‘to reduce to inactivity,’ or, less literally, “to make of none effect.” It can be argued that Jesus made the role of the Jewish leaders of no effect by his death; but, on the other hand, did the Jewish authorities have the power of death? The fact that they had to get the Romans to put Jesus to death shows that they did not.

There has to be a connection between that fact that Jesus was a partaker of our nature, as the first part of the verse states, and the destroying, or making of none effect, of the devil. If the devil here represents the Jewish authorities then it is difficult to see what the connection is. (The same point applies to the orthodox Christian view of the devil as a super-natural evil being). If the devil stands here for sin, then there is such a connection. Jesus had our nature that he might be “in all points tempted like as we are,” and that for the first time sin might be defeated in human flesh, and its power to bring death made of none effect for those who are the “many sons,” Christ’s “brethren” and “children” of the preceding verses.

Also, if the devil destroyed or brought to nought in verse 14 was the Jewish authorities, how did this “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” as the following verse says? If, however, the devil of verse 14 was sin in general we can see that bringing to nought sin does indeed deliver people from bondage and the fear of death.

Hebrews 7:26.27 *“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”* Is there a comparison here between the high priest under the Law, with Jesus in some sense offering for himself, or is there a contrast here, with Jesus as the sinless one not needing to offer for himself, only for the people?

The question revolves round what the word “this” in verse 27 refers to; is it the whole of “first for his own sins, and then for the people’s,” or just “the people’s”? There would seem to be little point in referring to the high priest offering “first for his own sins” as well as “for the people’s” if this was not part of the type fulfilled by Jesus. There is clearly a contrast here, but the contrast is between the high priests under the law offering “daily” and Jesus offering “once,” and between the fact of the high priest having to offer separately for himself and for the people whilst Jesus made one offering, himself.

This view of the verse is consistent with the overall teaching of the epistle, which culminates in Jesus being “brought again from the dead... through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (13:20). Chapter 5 begins;

“For every high priest taken from among men... is compassed with infirmity,” and the point being made is that this is so that he can “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.”

The chapter goes on to say that such a priest “ought, us for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.” Again we ask, is the writer making a comparison between Jesus and the high priests under the Law, or a contrast? The context shows it is the former, for in the previous chapter Jesus is presented as being “not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (4:15).

Later in chapter 5 Jesus is spoken of as having prayed earnestly for salvation “out of death” (9 v.7, RV mg.). The conclusion is, again, that Jesus in some sense fulfilled the type by making an offering for his “sin.” This “sin” was not, of course, sins which he committed, for there were none, so it must refer to the infirmity of human nature which he bore, mortality and a capacity for sin. Scripture presents Jesus as one who bore our nature and needed to be saved from it. He not only had our mortality but he had also our capacity to respond to temptation by sinning, though he never actually sinned. Through his life of perfect obedience, culminating in his willing offering of himself upon the cross, he secured both his own salvation from our nature and also the salvation of his followers, which Scripture presents as one work. I do not believe that we diminish him by speaking of him in such terms; rather, we exalt him, for what a wonderful thing it was that

one who suffered all the temptations that we have should triumph over them all under such difficulties, and all so that we might be saved from the consequences of our sins!

Tony Benson.

In response to the above article, Eric Cave wrote to Tony Benson as follows: -

Dear Brother Tony, I have been asked to comment on your article in the June Testimony under the heading “**The nature of Man and the Work of Christ - Some passages considered.**”

May I first say how pleased I am to see that you distance yourself from the objectionable, and in my view blasphemous views on the nature of Christ, so intimately connected with His work, as expressed in the series by C. Maddocks last year. Yet at the same time I am bound to say that I believe your considerations to be more notable for what is omitted than for what you have written.

There are no secrets about the nature of man as God created him. He was “very good,” nor is there any proof that his progeny are born different from Adam in any way, but as John Thomas declared, that ‘goodness’ was of an animal and physical nature, for God created him as a terrestrial and not a celestial creature. There are no other categories of ‘life.’ We can choose evil or we can choose good, we can reject our Creator, or we can obey His laws. If we reject Him and choose evil we perish. If we obey Him (Biblically expressed as ‘walking in spirit’) then we are promised a change of nature from terrestrial to celestial in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when our Lord returns. These are the simple scriptural facts about human nature. Sadly Christadelphian eyes have been shut and ears closed by a Statement of Faith which requires them to understand that their Redeemer whilst sinless and undefiled must at the same time be a physically condemned and defiled sacrifice, aided and abetted by editorial policies which suppress all expression of doubt and refuse to publish any criticism of their faulty Statement of Faith. You may believe that you have considered the selected passages of your article “in their context’ but in this writers opinion you have omitted many other relevant Scriptures which testify that our present sinful characters (not our corruptible nature) acquired rather than genetically inherited as the Statement of Faith requires. What is the point of divinely granted freedom of choice, if that freedom is overruled by a genetically implanted ‘physical law in our members,’ which causes us to do evil?

You have chosen to begin with **Psalm 58:3**, “*The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies*” and whilst your facts are correct it is not true that David’s words support the idea that there is nothing good about human nature. Are the righteous evil? Sin is matter of choice; it is not inherent within man, although continual yielding to Sin might make it appear so. But surely the words “as soon as they be born” should suggest what Jesus said about ‘little children’ namely “suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven” yet according to the BASF little children are ‘born sinners.’ So who is right? The Scripture, or the BASF? Why not admit that the truth that the work of Jesus was to redeem mankind from that “vain conversation received by tradition from our father’s” as expressed in 1 Peter 1:18.

Ezekiel 18:4 “*The soul that sinneth it shall die*” and verse 20, “*The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.*” How many times have we all heard verse 4 bracketed with “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” from Christadelphian platforms? Despite the ambiguity of your comments on these passages in Ezekiel I am pleased to note that the soul that sins, it shall die, is not a general statement about the human race. But I have never heard a Christadelphian speaker ask, “Which death does the prophet refer to?” Never have I heard anyone suggest that it could be the ‘second’ death rather than the common death of all men clearly defined by Moses in Numbers 16:29.

John 15:22 “*If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin:.. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.*” You correctly conclude that the passage is referring to the particular culpability of those who rejected Christ after hearing his preaching backed up by miracles. But that is only half the story, the complete picture is outlined for example in Romans 2; the whole of that chapter is relevant and none more so than the verse which says “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” Add to

that Galatians 3:22, "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" or Romans 11:32, "God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy on all." then the inevitable conclusion must be that our destiny is in our own hands and we are not constrained by some implanted 'bias to sin' as required by the BASF. God knows those who are His and He is engaged in taking out of the Gentiles a people for His Name. The Scriptures are provided for that purpose and those who don't want to know will be laid like sheep in the grave. These comments apply also to Romans 4:15 and 5:13.

Romans 5:19 "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." This passage raises the obvious question in relation to Christadelphian teaching that God implanted a 'bias to sin' within the flesh of mankind subsequent to Adam's sin to make us all sinners. So why does not the obedience of one make us all righteous? You query the significance of the word 'made' and claim that *kathistemi* literally means 'to place, or set down permanently' and that what the word seems to indicate is that men and women are set down in a constitution or order of things in which sin is inevitable, which cannot be true otherwise Christ could never have been sinless. Nor is it true that this occurs because mankind has a weak sin-prone nature inherited from Adam, and has to grow up in an environment inherently sinful. Scripture says, "Reject the devil and he will flee from you." Vine says that the word 'made' is used in the same way as in Acts 2:36 to mean "appoint." When Adam sinned he yielded himself servant (bond-slave) to Sin. He appointed himself and all his subsequent progeny to that condition, a legal technical situation in which his only wages were 'death' and from which there was no escape unless a near kinsman purchased his freedom by suffering that same judicially inflicted death. The divine plan involved God concluding all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to THEM THAT BELIEVE." John tells us that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The mistake you made here is in printing the word 'Sin' with a lower case 's' as if it were a verb instead of a name personifying the diabolos.

Compare:-

Verse 16, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey his servants ye are to whom ye obey."

Verse 20, "For when ye were the servants of Sin ye were free from righteousness."

Verse 22, "But now being made free from sin (having been purchased [redeemed] by the blood of Christ) and become servants to God."

Romans 8:3 Really Tony you know quite well that the phrase "sinful flesh" in this verse is incorrect. It should be Sin's flesh, or flesh of Sin, as Brother and Sister Walker were so careful to point out in "Romans In The Light Of John's Gospel" and as John Thomas recognized subsequent to publishing "Elpis Israel," and both corrected and contradicted in "Eureka." Nowhere in Scripture are we told that Jesus inherited a bias to sin, any more than we do. Sin is acquired as we grow up. Every human child is born as Adam was created "very good" as 1 Peter 1:18 proves, and especially of believers Paul says "the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy" and Peter says "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Why complicate Scripture by assumptions without proof. Of Jesus it was prophesied "butter and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Romans 8:18-23. If you look more critically at this passage and also at Mark 10:6 and 2 Peter 3:4 you will find that *ktisis* does not necessarily refer to the whole natural creation. Vine asserts that "it is a significant confirmation of Romans 1:21 that in all none Christian literature the word is never used by the Greeks to convey the idea of a creator or of a creative act by any of their gods - the word is confined by them to the acts of human beings."

2 Corinthians 5:21. Please consider - the only written Scriptures possessed by the recipients of this letter would be the LXX where the word *harmartia* is rendered over 120 times as 'sin-offering' as well as

'sin.' They would therefore understand that Paul was saying "For he hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Hebrews 2:14 "*Forasmuch then as the children (His brethren, see v 11-13) are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (until Christ purchased them with His own blood).*" Paul says in 9:26 "but now once in the end of the *aonion* hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He also says "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." John confirms with, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from ALL SIN" which should surely be sufficient to dispense with speculations about Jewish authorities or defeating sin in human flesh which you have introduced.

Hebrews 7:26,27. O dear! O dear! Having gone so far in admitting the significant points in my reviews of Chris Maddocks' work you now revert to tradition and ignore what I wrote about Jesus having to offer for Himself. The contrast is between the two offerings of the Levitical priesthood and the one offering of our Saviour, who in any case would not even have been eligible for the office of Levitical priesthood as He sprang from Judah. It is not between the daily offerings of the Mosaic priests and the once for all offering of His own body to redeem those who choose to grasp that salvation. How could Jesus have to offer for Himself when Daniel testifies that His 'cutting off' was "not for himself"? There is no verse in Scripture to even suggest that Jesus had to offer for His own sins. You are illogical in suggesting that because Jesus could be touched with the feelings of OUR infirmities then He must also have shared our sinful characters. For your suppositions to be admissible you would need to demonstrate an equation between a Levitical priest and a Melchizedec priest, which you cannot do.

With love in the Master's service,

Eric (Cave)

We leave the final word to Tony Benson:

Dear Brother Eric, Thank you for your letter of 10th July.

I have read your points carefully in conjunction with my article but nothing in what you say convinces me that I need to alter what I wrote.

Whilst it is true that I have offered a different interpretation of several verses to that offered by Brother Maddocks, I have, despite what you say, not distanced myself from his views on the nature of Christ, nor have I admitted the significant points in your review of his articles. The articles were published on the basis that they were doctrinally sound and this remains my view.

Sincerely your brother in Christ,

Tony Benson.
