

A JEW ACCEPTS JESUS

This is the testimony for Jesus written to his friends:

Let me explain how I, Leopold Dreifuss, accepted these Truths. Being a natural Jew, and having attended Christadelphian lectures for some time, I “became interested in the views of the Nazarene Fellowship.

I don't know whether you know us by this name. Most Christadelphians call us “Renunciationists,” or “Clean Flesh Heretics,” because of their mistaken idea that we deny that Jesus has come in our flesh.

Now, let me say from the outset that this is not true. Let me make it quite clear to you that we do acknowledge that Jesus has come in our flesh. Now, in the following, I will try to explain to you just where we differ from the Christadelphians, and how I came to be convinced of it.

In our opinion the most essential thing in the understanding of Scripture is to know the Lord, to understand the mission which God sent Him to fulfil. But to understand that we must first go into the questions of Sacrifice and Redemption.

Let us start right from the beginning of Creation and examine Adam's position before He sinned. There we see the first man created by God from the ground and pronounced “very good”. He was corruptible, for we read that there was the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Now, he had only one single commandment to keep - not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He was given a free will, therefore it was in his power to choose whether he would keep God's commandment or not. But although Adam and Eve were created very good, we must bear in mind that they were corruptible, and could sin if they so chose. For had they not the inclination to sin before they were driven out of Eden the serpent could never have succeeded in tempting them. However, the serpent did succeed, and they sinned.

Now, God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Let us find out what sort of death it was - natural death, or violent death? Very probably it was not to be a natural death, for he was corruptible in any case and depended on the Tree of Life if he was not to die. But we will discover yet better evidence as to which of the two deaths God meant. In the Hebrew text the sentence “thou shalt surely die” reads “dying thou shalt die.” This construction of a sentence is often used in Hebrew, and it indicates a strong affirmation. For example, when we say in English “he did come” in the sense “he surely came”, the Hebrew says “coming he came.” So, “dying, thou shalt die,” means a very certain death. Moreover, the same phrase occurs again later on in Genesis where Abimelech, king of Gera, took Sarah, thinking she was Abraham's sister. God, appearing to him in a dream, said, “thou shalt surely die” - in the Hebrew “dying thou shalt die.” There cannot be any doubt that this means judicial death, for he would have died the natural death anyway, and had it not been a sudden judicial death, why should Abimelech have been in such a hurry to send Sarah away. Finally, the phrase occurs when Solomon tells one of his enemies not to cross the brook of Kidron. But Shimei did cross the river, and we read that he was stabbed to death. So here we have the best evidence that the sentence “thou shalt surely die” is a violent, sudden or judicial death.

This death Adam deserved, but, had he suffered, it there and then, none of us would ever have lived, and God's purpose to fill the earth with His glory would have been frustrated. This could not be. The first thing God did was to act in mercy. He slew a lamb and thus transferred Adam's guilt to an innocent animal. This, of course, was only a temporary measure, until Christ came, but I shall say more on that later. Only let me say here that God is merciful, but He is also just, a just God who will never repent. Adam's sin had to be paid for somehow. It could not have been forgiven, for how could God look over the breaking of His commandment and yet establish His authority? The lamb which was sacrificed, and whose skin He subsequently used to clothe Adam and Eve, was only a temporary

measure. Of course God foreknew what He was going to do. But until Christ paid the penalty, the slaying of animals had to continue.

Man was now in a position in which he was estranged from God. God had to keep him from the Tree of Life, because before man was once more qualified to Eternal Life, the first sin, or rather the penalty for it, had to be paid for. Until Christ's advent man's right to Eternal Life was forfeited, or in the words of Paul (Romans 7:14) mankind was "sold under sin."

It is a general principle in Scripture, by which God gives man a choice to serve either good or evil. When man chooses the evil, he has nobody but himself to blame for the consequences. Cain and Abel had that choice: one chose the good, the other the evil. Joshua put that choice before the children of Israel. He said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Going back to Adam, he also chose the evil when he transgressed. He was now sold under sin, the servant of sin. Sin is often personified in Scripture as a master. Adam sold himself to that master. This last sentence, of course, is figurative speech, and it really means, as explained above, that he was estranged from God. But let us again examine the phrase "sold under sin." You will, no doubt, know that in old times, when slavery was practised, a slave was the property of his master. Everybody who was born to him while he served became automatically his master's property.

If he wanted to become free he had to be redeemed. With this at the back of your mind you should now appreciate what it means to be "sold under sin." It means that the whole of Adam's posterity was under the master of Sin. In practice, that meant that they were born without the right to Eternal Life, unless they obtained that right by bringing their sacrifices as a recognition of their need of redemption. Needless to say, of course, that these sacrifices had to be brought in the right spirit of faith.

Under the Law of Moses this need was even more pressed home. What was the meaning of the daily sacrifices, the Passover Lamb, the services on the Day of Atonement? Was it not the constant lesson that there was a need of redemption? These sacrifices were not for any particular transgression of any particular law: for if anyone sinned he had to bring a sacrifice in addition to all these, and if he brought it in the right spirit of faith and true repentance, God forgave him, for how often do we read in Leviticus, "If a soul sin, he shall bring... and it shall be forgiven him," God does not exact a penalty over and over again - that is not the idea of a merciful God. So the daily sacrifices, etc., must have been for something else.

As you know, these sacrifices in themselves cannot take away sin. The redemption of mankind from this bondage to Sin could only be paid for by the antitypical Sacrifice of Christ Himself. But although these animals could not redeem mankind as a whole, the keeping of the law, together with faith, did give a few individuals title to eternal life, to mention only Elijah, Caleb and Joshua (the only two to survive Israel's 40 years' journey in the wilderness). There were also Enoch and Noah, before the Mosaic Law, of whom the Scripture records that they pleased God. Even after the introduction of the Mosaic Law we read of many who have kept it. "The law and the commandment is holy, just and good," and it was "ordained to life" (Romans 7:10).

What was it then that the law could not do? It could give title to eternal life to individuals, and we know that Moses and David, who are now asleep, have obtained a title to it. They were sold under sin as much as anybody. "What the law could not do" was to redeem from Adam's sin.

When we want to gain information about God's plan concerning anything, we look at the Old Testament and then apply it to the New Testament. Let us now do that to find out something about the Divine plan concerning redemption.

According to the Mosaic Law, an Israelite who became a bondservant could redeem himself if he had the means; otherwise the next of kin had to do it. But we can learn even more about this topic from Exodus. Israel was in bondage to Pharaoh. God chose Moses as their redeemer. Moses was an

Israelite by birth, but by law he was in a position different from the other Israelites, He was not under the Egyptian bondage, for Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her son.

Let us now apply this to Christ, our Redeemer from the Adamic bondage to Sin. He was born of a woman, our nature. But He was the Son of God, and therefore not under bondage to Sin. For by divine law the man, the father, decides under Law whose the child is. But this will not affect his flesh and blood; his nature is the same. Similarly, Jesus was of human nature, but not born servant to Sin, He was one who had power to redeem. And just as Moses was brought up by Pharaoh's daughter and dwelt at Midian in the wilderness until the time came that God appointed him his task, so Jesus was brought up with a human foster father, and He went into the wilderness where He was tempted, before He began the preaching of the Gospel.

Because Jesus was of our flesh he had, of course, the same inclination to sin as we all. He had to make the choice between good and evil - between fulfilling His Father's will and His own will. But where Adam failed, He succeeded. Here, then, are the essential points about Jesus' redemptive work.

He, like Adam, had a free and unforfeited life. Whereas Adam was the son of God by creation, Jesus was the Son of God by begettal, and thus Adam's next-of-kin - and hence in a position to redeem Adam from the bondage to Sin. He paid the penalty which Adam should have paid, and which the animals paid in type - that is, a violent death, with the pouring out of His blood (for "dying, thou shall die," was God's sentence).

There was no violation here of Moses' Commandment in Deuteronomy that the children shall not be put to death for their parents' ...for Jesus gave His life. He didn't need to give it to reconcile Himself to His own Father: for He was never under Sin, and never forfeited His right to life. But He died for Adam's sin, which had become "the Sin of the world"; He offered Himself, knowing that He had the power to lay down His life and take it up again - for why shouldn't He have had that power?

What is mankind's position today? Adam's sin has been paid for - God is just, and nobody ever has to die again as a punishment for Adam's sin. But Adam's act has left mankind under a great disadvantage. He has cut off all his posterity from the Tree of Life. If we want to obtain eternal life, we must associate ourselves with Christ. Of course, those that never see the Light are just like the beasts of the field that perish. But those who do see the Light become responsible,

I was convinced of this doctrine, for I found it far more logical than anything I have ever heard on religion. Nothing which any minister preaches is anything like it. I have learned a lot by attending Christadelphian lectures. But I have never seen it so clearly. Because I realised this responsibility I was immersed, for once a person sees Light and does not avail himself of this great salvation, he confirms Adam's sin. He is then "in Adam," and Paul writes: "As in Adam all die..." (1 Corinthians 15:2a). This death, which all in Adam die, is the judicial death on the day of judgement, for, from what I have been saying all the time, you should find that it cannot be the natural death; for everybody dies this death - even those who never see Light and are under no Divine law; for where there is no law there is no transgression (Romans 4:15), Hence, those people will not incur the penalty for sin, which is violent death, yet they die a natural death.

Once we are "baptised we are in the same legal position as Adam before he sinned, or Jesus. But, of course, we can forfeit our right to eternal life if we sin wilfully: for if we sin "a sin unto death" now and get our name blotted out of the book of life, there is now no sacrifice but a fearful looking for the fiery judgment. But otherwise, we are now the Children of God, not through anything we have done, but only because of God's mercy in sending His Son. And even so, we are only children by adoption, while Jesus is God's Son by begettal. Well, can you now explain why it was necessary that Jesus should have been born the miraculous way in which He was? And can you now see why men like Moses and Elijah and Noah could not redeem us from "the Sin of the world," although their records show a life which pleased God?

Well, there is just one more topic which, to our great regret, presents a difficulty to many Christadelphians, so that they cannot see many of the beauties of God's word. Concerning this idea of "sinful flesh." This phrase occurs only once in Scripture - in Romans 8:5. All linguists agree that this is a faulty translation. The Greek version says "Sin's flesh". The word "sin" in Scripture is often used for "sin offering" (see Genesis 4:7, which is absolutely without any sense - unless "sin" here means "sin offering" - a lamb, or a bullock; for in Cain's day people were shepherds, and there would be an animal at his door handy if required for sacrifice). And in Romans 8:5 "sin" also means "sin offering," or, according to the margin of my Bible, "sacrifice for sin".

The seventh chapter of Romans is regarded as very difficult by most Christadelphians.

Let us link this up with chapters 6 and 8. In chapter 6, verse 20, Paul says, "for when ye were servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." He goes on to explain how we were made free from sin, etc. Now he inserts chapter 7, as in parenthesis, in which he describes his position before he was converted, while he was the servant of Sin. Then, in chapter 8, or rather the last verse of chapter 7, he links up his former statement with his new position, and then, in chapter 8, declares: "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Now, here the word "flesh" cannot be our natural literal flesh: for we have that after our immersion exactly as before. It refers, of course, to his position before he was converted. This now gives us the key to chapter 7. When Paul says "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," he speaks of the time before his conversion. For, if in our literal flesh dwelt no good thing, how could our bodies possibly be the temple of God? Finally, let us look again at chapter 8, verse 9. "But ye are not in the flesh" (those brethren were, of course, in their natural flesh), "but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." So, then, the "flesh" means the state before baptism, the "spirit" afterwards, or sometimes, instead of the "flesh" we read about the old man - "put off the old man."

Now, if you think about these things, I am sure that with the interest and scriptural knowledge you have got, you will find out many interesting and beautiful things.

If you want to know more about these beautiful truths, write to me,

Sincerely your brother in Christ, Leopold Dreifuss.