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to

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIA, **SYDNEY, N.S.W.**

JUNE 1969

One of your brethren has sent me a copy of the “Statement for Consideration, 20th August 1968” issued by the Central Standing Committee, with the request that I deal with it. It is an astonishing document by any standard and I consider it of such importance that I am addressing my comments to you in the form of an Open Letter because you are the people most immediately concerned, since the Authors are based in Sydney and probably belong to your Ecclesia, but it also concerns Christadelphians all over the world.

The Statement consists of five typescript pages comprising nineteen propositions and its purpose is to outline an explanation of current Christadelphian doctrine on the creation, nature and future of man and his relationship to the death of Christ. It is manifestly intended to settle the arguments which are now tearing the community to pieces. Some of the propositions are unimpeachable, but others are contradictory and worse, and even where there seems to have been a real effort to be explicit they are confused and confusing. Whether this simply reflects a confusion in the minds of the Authors or is a studied attempt to gloss over what they realise is a flaw in their reasoning we cannot decide. There are lots of Scripture references but these are exceeded both in number and volume by quotations from “The Unity Book” and the writings of Robert Roberts. As their purpose is to show that these are not really in conflict with the views which many Christadelphians now accept, this is not altogether unreasonable, but if one is trying to decide what is truth and what is error, it is surely better to look afresh at the Scriptures in the light of our own reason than to keep repeating and defending what others have said, however highly we may respect them. This is what some of us have done and we have come to the conclusion that the belief which has always been regarded as a basic first principle - that by sin Adam brought upon himself and all his descendants a physical defilement resulting in what we know as natural death - is wrong. We reached this conclusion, not because we had some special revelation about the meaning of the early chapters of Genesis but for two reasons which seem to us to be both logical and scriptural. Firstly we came to realise that if Adam’s disobedience was punished by a change of nature, only God could have brought about such a change and then, inevitably, God Himself would be responsible for all the sin and wickedness in the world. Secondly, we saw that if human nature was physically defiled by sin, then inevitably again, Jesus was defiled. On these two grounds therefore we were convinced that the traditional Christian understanding of what is known as the Fall of Man is something which never happened. Of the two, the first is the more unforgivable error because it reflects upon the justice of God, not to mention His intelligence. There is no doubt that God made us how we are and if by nature we are prone to sin He has only Himself to blame if we are sinners. It may seem irreverent to some to speak like this about the Deity, but He expects us to exercise the one faculty which raises us above the animals, namely our reason, and He invites our verdict upon His actions. “Judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to me vineyard that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah 5:3,4). If the husbandman planted diseased vines what would he expect but rotten fruit? If on the contrary we are capable of being good and are bad only because we are perverse and ungrateful children, then He is just and fair in treating us as we deserve. But the second error is the more serious, because it leads directly to that greatest of all distortions in Christian history - the assertion that the death of Christ was necessary for His own deliverance from the bondage of sin. This is a fatal error, because it destroys the sacrificial principle upon which God offers salvation and it leaves those who believe it without hope, because they are

expecting to be saved because they are following Christ, as their representative, whereas salvation is only for those who belong to Christ, because they believe they have been purchased by Him with His own blood. There is a world of difference.

It is now nearly a century since these matters were brought to the notice of the community by Edward Turney and during all those years his words have been suppressed or misrepresented by leading Christadelphians in order to keep their members faithful to the Constitution, making it almost impossible for them to discover what were the facts behind the labels "Clean Flesh" and "Renunciationism" which they stuck on us. At last however the cat is struggling out of the bag and even the most rabid advocates of sinful flesh are now being compelled to clean themselves up a bit. This is what appears to be in part the object of this Statement issued by the Central Standing Committee, and while it ought to be analysed in detail, we think it best for your enlightenment to stick to one big plain issue which now faces Christadelphians.

This is opened up in Proposition 8 of the Statement, which reads:-

"It is agreed that the sentence did not change the natural flesh and blood nature the man and woman possessed before transgression."

These two lines amount to a frank admission that the whole fabric of doctrine based on Sin-in-the-flesh, the belief that sin defiled and became a physical law of man's being has been a complete mistake - futile, empty, misguided unscriptural nonsense. The remainder of the proposition makes not the slightest difference to this admission, and coming from the source it does, a group who claim to be the leaders of the loyal conservative back-bone of "The Truth" in Australia, the authors of The Unity Book, those who were responsible for Re-union by re-affirming the sanctity of the B.A.S.F. and the Carter-Cooper Addendum, it is utterly astonishing.

It is understandably satisfying to us, branded as heretics for so long, to see our reasoning at last recognized by a committee of such standing, but it must be shattering for you, who have been fed on the belief that the sentence in Eden changed the very good nature in which our first parents were created to flesh full of sin. Everyone knows that this is what Christadelphians have always believed. In The Unity Book itself they quote (page 69) Robert Roberts' words "Sin-in-the-flesh is physical. Men are mortal because of Adam's sin." They quote the words of John Carter in the lecture he gave to you in Regent Hall, "It was because, Son of God as he was, that the Lord's body was a body belonging to the Adamic race, dying because of sin, Adam's sin. There is the inheritance, there is the entail." Now they say "It is agreed there was no change." As blandly as that! They do not say "this is a new thing." They do not say "we were mistaken before..." They do not even say with whom it is agreed.

It is common knowledge that in your country there were always some who consistently refused to accept Clause 5 of B.A.S.F. about the implantation of a physical law of decay and a bias towards sin and it was one of the things you might well have felt proud about, although they were a minority, always regarded as cranks and heretics and only to be tolerated as long as they caused no trouble. But when Carter and Cooper forced through Re-union those who were not dead were bull-dozed into silence by the threat of disfellowship. Is it now agreed with them that human nature was never changed? If so, why are A.R.D.Moye and a few others still getting the treatment prescribed on page 14 of their precious book? However, and with whoever they are now agreeing, we must be thankful that they recognise that Adam, created from the ground, a living soul and like all the other creations, very good of its kind, was a corruptible being like you and me and as capable of good and evil as we are. One would have expected that when the Central Standing Committee made this discovery that they would have sat down quietly and asked themselves whether, since there was no physical change, our Fellowship may not have been right all along in the contention that the change was a legal one; that Adam alienated himself and his descendants from his Maker? Perhaps this is what they did, but realising perhaps the enormity of the confession they had made, they found they had not the courage to follow it through. Honesty really demanded that they should say candidly "Brethren, we have been

defending a lie all these years. We were always convinced that Robert Roberts was right when he wrote that Adam sinned and was condemned and we as his children inherit the mortality that was the consequence, and that is why we quoted him in The Unity Book. But now we realise that he was wrong and that there was never any change of nature.” But there is no word of apology or of explanation; they have contended themselves with putting it down with the nonchalance with which, seeing the clouds gathering one might remark that it looks like rain!

In the remainder of Proposition 8 they refer to the sentence as having certain physiological consequences; the serpent to move on his belly and eat dust - which of course had nothing to do with human nature or any physical consequences for man. To Eve bringing forth children in sorrow - no change of nature necessary for this; to the earth bringing forth thorns and thistles - again no reference to human nature; and to man experiencing the need to labour for his bread as long as life lasted. In none of these is there a shred of evidence that sin affected the flesh or changed the nature, yet the authors say “the sentence thus became a law of his substance and was inherited by his posterity.” We know what they mean by this but they make no attempt to explain; all they do is to say “This is well defined by the Carter-Cooper Addendum.” We will look at this in a moment, but so far as the C.S.C. Statement is concerned, the first two lines of Proposition 8 are one of the few clear unambiguous statements and nothing they add diminishes in the slightest the importance of the agreed point. No one but an ‘idiot’ would write a comprehensive major premise admitting of no qualification and then add a subordinate clause which contradicts it; and these people are by no means idiots. We must therefore take their word for it that they really do agree with us that there is no evidence that human nature was in any way different after the transgression from what it was when first created. The reasoning is decisive; if the sentence itself did not change man’s flesh and blood nature, then no part of the sentence or combination of its parts could have done so.

How are we then to account for Proposition 9 where they say “This sentence thus became a law of his substance and the consequences of Adam's transgression (but not his guilt) were inherited by his posterity”? You see what we mean about confusion and contradiction? Nothing they have said suggests how “a sentence,” which is only a group of words, could have a physiological effect. All they have said is the exact opposite - there was no physical effect or change. If a human judge sentences a murderer to death, the sentence does not change his nature - he does not commence to die. If the sentence is executed he is put to death, but if he is reprieved he will continue to live his natural life span, and when he eventually dies the common death it is not because the sentence changed his nature but because he is a natural corruptible creature with a limited life-span. The C.S.C. recognizes this in Proposition 8 but in Proposition 9 they go back on themselves and make the impudent declaration that the sentence became a law of his substance which we inherit. They cannot explain it - they don't know how it happened - they say it did not happen - but they say it was defined in the Carter-Cooper Addendum. So we go to the famous Addendum, twice recorded in The Unity Book (pages 12 and 14) and this is how it is defined:-

“We believe that Adam was made of the earth and declared to be very good; because of disobedience to God's law, he was sentenced to return to the dust. He fell from his very good estate, suffered the consequences of sin - shame, a defiled conscience and mortality. As his descendants, we partake of that mortality that came by sin and inherit a nature prone to sin.”

No one in recent years has made a statement more clearly and categorically affirming the doctrines of Sin-in-the-flesh and changed nature. And this is from The Unity Book, compiled by the same writers and repeated in the very next proposition to the one in which the contrary is just as clearly affirmed. “It is agreed that the Sentence did not change the natural flesh and blood nature the man and woman possessed before transgression.” What do they really mean? What do they really think? What are you as a Christadelphian to believe now? This is confusion worse confounded. The nature was not changed but it was changed. Sin did not get into the flesh but it did! We do not die because Adam sinned but we do! Mortality did not come because Adam sinned but it did! What a mix-up and what a heart-rending dilemma you are placed in.

It is just about 10 years since the Carter-Cooper Addendum was put forward as the basis for Re-union and less than 6 since The Unity Book was published. When the late W.R.Maxwell sent me a copy and asked me if I felt inclined to tackle it, I found it such a mass of sickening confusion, and John Carter's two lectures so full of evasions and double talk that it would have required volumes to deal with it adequately and I judged that many of you were bored with the whole subject. The one clear fact that emerges is that the Addendum is a clever hoax designed simply to pull the wool over the eyes of the brethren and sisters and lead them to think they were getting an improvement on Clause 5 of B.A.S.F. One of its authors is dead, but the other is still with us. If Cyril Cooper should ever visit you again it is suggested that you ask him plainly if Adam's falling from his very good estate, suffering the consequences of sin, a defiled conscience, mortality, and a nature prone to sin, did not constitute a change of nature. If he answers yes, ask him what he thinks should be done about the Central Standing Committee who say now that it did not. Ask him how they stand in regard to their own directive as to what must be done in the case of any brother who departs from any element of the One Faith as it is there defined (The Unity Book page 14). If he answers no, ask him why the doctrine of Sin-in-the-flesh was so cunningly hidden behind the term "mortality."

The fact is that the Central Fellowship, in order to attain Re-union resorted to deceit and ambiguities to disguise the true position and used the C.S.C. as their cats' paw to force you Australian brethren back into the doctrine of Sinful Flesh which you had been painfully shaking off. Their Statement makes it evident that even they have now realised that you were deceived and they are starting back along the path to sanity by their admission in Proposition 8. John Carter tried to make out that the Central Fellowship had never believed in Sin-in-the-flesh and although he dissociated himself from people like H.P. Mansfield and P.O.Barnard with their "Sin-impregnated nature" and "inherited uncleanness" he never explicitly rejected these ideas, otherwise he would have been in trouble when he got back to England. In his lecture on Isaiah 53 and when he was questioned about specific statements made by other Christadelphians he was plainly in great straits and although he could only clumsily evade the issue the horrible old doctrine was still there all the time; applying both to us and worst of all to Jesus; "The Lord's body was a body belonging to the Adamic race, dying because of sin, Adam's sin. There is the inheritance."

So now this bastard monster has been strangled by the very people who nurtured it in Australia, the Central Standing Committee. The big trouble is that the corpse is still on their hands, and as the Statement goes on it is clear that they don't know how to dispose of it.

In Propositions 12 to 18 they explain, or rather try to explain, what they consider to be the current Christadelphian understanding of The Atonement, and regardless of their admission that sin did not change the nature and bring about a physical defilement, they proceed to develop precisely the same explanation of the Crucifixion as has always been based upon that belief which they now confess to be false. All they do is to replace the old theory of physical defilement with ceremonial or legal uncleanness, and in doing so they pay us the compliment of admitting a gem of truth which we have been offering Christadelphians for many years; they are in fact stealing our clothes. Unfortunately they do not know how to wear them and are trying to put them on over the old filthy garments of their predecessors, for they quote from three of their leaders' passages on which the doctrine of changed nature, literal defilement and physical uncleanness is only too plainly evident.

Dr. Thomas: "The Christ Deity veiled himself in the Adamic nature, defiled by sin, in order that he might condemn to death the nature... legally defiled by transgression." (It ought to be said in passing that we consider the term "Christ Deity" is not permissible; nor the idea of "veiling himself." Jesus was not Christ Deity, nor did He veil himself in anything. He was a man, the same in nature as ourselves but the Son of God).

Robert Roberts: "There is a cleansing which can only be effected by death."

C.C.Walker: "In the divine symbolism the flesh is always regarded as unclean and defiling."

The purpose for which they adduce these quotations is to show that all men, irrespective of what they are personally, deserve to die because they are human nature, and they apply the same reasoning to Christ. He was required by God to submit Himself to the death of the Cross because of the nature He inherited from Adam. This is wrong. He needed, they say quite correctly, deliverance (from our natural corruptible state) if He was to live for ever, but they add, wrongly, that He could only obtain it and gain eternal life by passing through death. They will not contemplate the possibility that being sinless He might have been translated without dying. They cannot or will not see that the legal condemnation which came by sin only applies to those whose life is part of the life of Adam - we who are descended directly from him. No legal condemnation could pass upon a man who was divinely begotten and thus received His life fresh from the Source. The sad thing is that they can see the logic of this but they dare not agree to it because this would leave them with no other explanation of His death than that He gave Himself a sacrifice to redeem us. They are resolved to regard Jesus as their representative, sinless it is agreed, but with defiled Adamic nature from which He could only be cleansed by death. Thus in their explanation of The Atonement they contradict their own admission that there was no change of nature. In their view, only a changed defiled nature offers an explanation of Christ's death.

In Propositions 13 and 14 it is admitted that Christ died for our sins and was made a curse for us. These are plain Scriptures and therefore while they mention them, they cannot take them at face value. To say that He died because of His inherited nature is a denial of these passages. To us they mean that He died for us and not in any sense for Himself and it is important to discover how and why He could do so. We think it means that when He died on the Cross He suffered the penalty which Adam incurred by sin but could not pay without perishing, and we believe there is a simple and satisfactory explanation of this in Jesus' own words where He says, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" also from the Apostle Peter when he wrote, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened in the Spirit."

In explaining what these statements mean we have sometimes used a word which while perfectly appropriate, is very much misunderstood - substitution. Many Christadelphians are offended by this word, because they are convinced that it implies the infliction of punishment on an innocent one as the condition of allowing the guilty to escape. They consider, (and we agree) that it would not be just or reasonable for God to have put Jesus to death instead of Adam. But would it have been any more just for God to have put Jesus to death simply because He had a defiled nature, when He was personally sinless? You must agree it would not. But it does not follow that there is not a true sense in which Jesus' death had a substitutionary character; that when we read He died for our sins there is not a true sense in which He died instead of sinners. The solution is seen if we ask what was lost by sin and what was paid by Jesus. The answer is - life.

It has been truly said that the word "substitute" is not applied to Jesus and in fact is not even found in the Bible; but the principle of substitution is thoroughly scriptural and is deeply founded in the laws of sacrifice, in the principles of ransom and purchase, and in several particular events. If there is one fact about the death of Christ which is more insistently taught than all others it is that it was a sacrifice. "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Now here is a remarkable thing to observe. Neither the word sacrifice itself nor any shade or sense of its meaning anywhere appears in the C.S.C. Statement! This is because the view they defend destroys every sacrificial element in The Atonement, because it makes His death a debt which He owed, the means of His own deliverance.

Robert Roberts thought he had settled the matter logically and for all time when he wrote "If Jesus was our substitute, we ought not to die and he ought not to have risen." This sounds a better argument than it really is and although it is regularly repeated it does not bear very close examination. First, Jesus did not die to save us from dying a natural death, but to save us from perishing. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not

perish but have everlasting life.” The reason why those who belong to Christ still die is because the time for their reward has not come, not because they have to receive the wages of sin. Those who belong to Christ and are alive when the day appointed arrives will not die but be changed in a moment. That disposes of the first point. Second, if the price of redemption had been a corrupting corpse then Jesus should have remained in the grave. But the ransom price was not a dead body but a life, and this is what Jesus paid for us. “The life of all flesh is in the blood thereof and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls.”

The life which Jesus laid down was the life of His flesh in the blood. He gave this for us, the equivalent of the life which Adam forfeited but never could have paid without perishing and He did not receive it back - it had gone for ever to purchase us back to God - and He was raised with the life of the Spirit. “Put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit.”

We believe that a little more humility and a greater consciousness of the mercy of God and the love of Jesus would require us to reverse the terms of Robert Roberts syllogism and put it like this, “If Jesus was not our substitute, we ought never to have lived and He ought not to have died.”

In a brief outline, this is how the two aspects of the matter appear to us.

1. The wages of sin is death. Without the shedding of blood is no remission. When Adam disobeyed God, in that literal day he deserved to be put to death; bloodshedding implies a penal death. In fact he was not put to death, because God mercifully provided the first sacrifice. But the life of an animal could not redeem the life of a man; it could only be an object of faith foreshadowing a better sacrifice. Jesus was the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Therefore if in the fullness of time Jesus had proved unfit or unwilling to give Himself as the true sacrifice, thus justifying God's forbearance in Eden, we could never have lived because Adam would have perished. Therefore it follows that if Jesus had not been our substitute (or sacrifice) we ought never to have lived.

2. Jesus was the Son of God and therefore heir to all things created. As Mary's child He was related to Adam and identical in nature, but being begotten by the Holy Spirit His life came direct from God and was not derived from the life which was condemned in Eden. He was put on probation and tempted like His brother but was sinless, so that He was never in any sense estranged from God like Adam and his offspring. Therefore although He was corruptible there was no reason why He should die unless He had voluntarily chosen to allow Himself to be unjustly condemned and crucified by hateful men, having realised that He was the Saviour foreseen in God's purpose from the beginning. Therefore it follows that unless Jesus was our substitute (or sacrifice) He ought not to have died.

We consider these explanations are scripturally unassailable and answer every possible objection to accepting Jesus' death as a substitutionary sacrifice in the true sense of the term.

It is surprising that Christadelphians entertain such a horror of this view and we attribute the fact to intemperate hostility and deliberate misrepresentation. We noticed years ago a passage in *Elpis Israel* where Dr. Thomas spoke of “the death of the substitutionary testator” indicating that he shared in some degree the view we advocate. At any rate he was not terrified by the word. It appears however that after his death someone expunged the words “substitutionary testator” and replaced them, by the word “mediator,” which appear in the later editions. We do not know who was responsible for this tampering, but clearly it was someone who had an interest in suppressing what Dr. Thomas had said because it conflicted with his own idea, and this points to Robert Roberts. No-one has the right to alter a man's work after he is dead - his mistakes may sometimes be the most valuable part of his work - but it appears as if when R.R. was faced with impressive scriptural opposition he became almost unscrupulous.

The explanation of The Atonement given by Robert Roberts in “The Blood of Christ” is one of the most terrible misinterpretations any sincere Christian has ever made. Its shocking reflection upon the mind of God (if we may use the expression) and its negation of anything in the nature of a voluntary sacrifice in the death of Christ is scarcely credible:

“It pleased God to require the ceremonial condemnation of this sin-nature in crucifixion in the person of a righteous possessor of it, as the basis of our forgiveness.²”

Frightful things have been done by Christians in the name of their faith, but nothing worse has surely ever been said. It is not now often quoted or the doctrine expressed in those precise terms, but that statement is still the bedrock of Christadelphian teaching and whenever it becomes necessary to argue against the true sacrificial principle it comes to the surface. We have shown it to be so in The Unity Book and the Addendum and although the Central Standing Committee have confessedly abandoned the changed nature theory on which it is founded, they are helplessly driven back to it because they have no other explanation of Christ’s death. Exactly the same is true of contemporary writers - a few examples will suffice:

W.F.Barling, in “Redemption in Christ Jesus” – “For Christadelphians, human flesh is wholly evil... serpent nature. Diabolos was in the flesh of Jesus... It was not wrong for him to die.”

A.D.Norris in “Understanding The Bible” and his “New Confession of Faith” – “The defects of (Jesus) flesh... its essential ugliness... its fundamental corruptness. Jesus was sin. When Jesus hung upon the Cross...the Devil hung there dead... The death of Jesus displayed his own consciousness of the proper end of that which was not “good.””

H.P.Mansfield in “Christ’s Death and Your Salvation” – “At the end of a life of perfect obedience, his flesh was Crucified and publicly exhibited as a final demonstration that “the flesh profiteth nothing.””

Lies and blasphemies, every single assertion. The kindest thing one could say about the writers is that they must be mad. There is nothing the matter with human flesh except its impermanence - like the grass, springing up fresh, green and lovely but soon withered and gone. Our natural span is short but while we live we are as capable of goodness as of badness, of love as of hate, of nobility as of degradation. When the prophet Jeremiah speaks of the heart as deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, he is not defining what the C.S.C. call a physiological principle of the flesh. He is uttering a poetic generalization above the moral state of the majority of mankind - it is a scriptural exaggeration or hyperbole and we think he would have been horrified that anyone should suppose he was advocating the idea that men are wicked because they are born with a sinful nature. Had he been, how could he in the same context declare, “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” Jesus Himself puts the balance right when He says,

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

There is nothing wrong with hearts as such; in the wicked man it may be said to be deceitful and desperately wicked but in a good man, and in particular in Jesus, the heart bringeth forth that which is good. It is a question of character and way of life.

In the crucifixion, God was not punishing Jesus instead of Adam, or instead of us; nor was He penalizing Him for possessing human nature. God was giving Him (John 3:16) in order to show mercy and love towards sinners, and unquestionably we are expected to recognise that God Himself suffered in the same sense with Jesus, like any human father who sees a beloved child in anguish, because this is the means by which God could show us love. This is how Jesus was a manifestation of His Father - this is how He was God with us - because in His suffering God was suffering. You may

say “Well, I believe all this” and you may sincerely think you do, but if as a Christadelphian you are committed to the view represented by those just quoted, that the death of Christ required by God because He was human nature you are completely nullifying what you profess to believe. It is impossible to regard it as a debt due from Himself and necessary for His own deliverance and at the same time as a sacrifice for us. The two things are a contradiction. In order really to understand why Christ died, you have to recognise that it was His life that He gave as the ransom for ours. He paid our debt when we were bankrupt because He had the price.

It is terrible to affirm that God contrived a ritual murder in order to hold up to scorn and humiliation the human nature which He had created and which was shown to all the world, in Jesus’ own life, to be still very good for its purpose and potential. The primary explanation of His death was the envy and hatred of His own people, because of what they saw in Him. It was an event in history in which we can see cause and effect in operation like any other. But it was more than this, because God foresaw what would happen when a truly good man appeared making the claims that Jesus made and living up to the principles He preached and He had hung the weight of His plan of salvation upon what He foreknew. He therefore allowed the events He had foreseen to develop to the point where Jesus suffered judicial murder. God did not do it. God did not plan It. God did not require it. He foresaw it and made it the means of saving sinners by faith. Wicked men acted freely and of their own evil volition, and strict justice, both Divine and human, demanded that He should be protected from them, but God allowed it to happen because He had appointed that His undeserved death should be the antitypical sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. Jesus honoured His Father by voluntarily taking up the burden which the Divine plan required for its completion, but it was not in any way to satisfy God’s anger or to change His attitude towards us, but in order to produce in sinners a recognition of their own unworthiness and helplessness and develop in them the faith which is pleasing to God.

The one great indisputable fact about Christ’s death is that He went to it voluntarily. That is what makes it a sacrifice - it was for us, for sinners, not for Himself. He earned eternal life by keeping God’s law perfectly, not by dying. He gave His life for His sheep, not to save Himself, for He was never in peril. We know from His own words, that even at the last hour, if His courage and self-sacrificing love had proved insufficient to enable Him to endure the trial and unjust condemnation, He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to deliver Him. Moreover, it must be recognized that if perchance He had faltered, there could have been no penalty, except the realization of personal failure, since there is no law which requires a man to give his life even for his friends, far less for sinners, most of whom are both ignorant - and ungrateful. It was to do with God’s will and for the joy before Him to see a multitude of the redeemed in the Kingdom that He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

We conclude this letter with the Apostolic benediction which, in the dislocated Hebrew form in which it stands in our Bible is a boon to those who like to believe that Jesus had to die for Himself, but which, when the adverbial clause is put in its proper place after the main verb, is seen to teach otherwise.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect through the blood of the everlasting covenant, in every good work to do His will...”

Jesus was brought again from the dead, not by bloodshedding but because God could not suffer this holy one to see corruption. It is we who need to be made perfect through the offering of His blood, in accordance with the everlasting covenant.

Ernest Brady.