

LIFE BY LAW AND BY GRACE

PREFACE

“The Christadelphian” for May-October 1946, published a series of articles entitled, “Redemption in Christ Jesus,” which were answered in a pamphlet called “My Life for the Sheep.” The reception of this work amongst believers in this country and abroad has been so encouraging and the expressions of disapproval of the articles in question so widespread that it has been decided to reply to two other articles by the same author, Mr.W.F.Barling, on related topics. These also originally appeared in “The Christadelphian” but have since been reprinted as appendices in the pamphlet “Redemption in Christ Jesus.”

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The Reply to

"HE ASKED LIFE OF THEE"

(“The Christadelphian,” December 1945)

Before commencing a detailed examination of this article it should be made clear that underlying the whole argument, and therefore damning it from the start, is the false theory of sinful flesh and defiled human nature. Sufficient has already been written to expose the foolishness of this idea, and prominent Christadelphians in all sections of the community make no secret of the fact that they no longer defend it. But the writer has made a single colossal blunder which has led him into a morass of contradiction, misapplied Scripture and erroneous conclusions.

He has taken statements from the letters of the Apostle Paul, written after the Mosaic Law had been superseded and applying only to members of the Christian Church, and he has applied them to periods and to people to which they have no relation whatsoever and to which Paul certainly never intended them to apply. This is a foolish and blameworthy error in one who sets out to be a teacher and one might have expected an editor to be sharp enough to protect his readers from such nonsense; but it implies a violation of a fundamental principle of all justice, i.e., that a change of law cannot operate retrospectively.

The purpose of Mr Barling's article is to prove that the Law of Moses could not give eternal life and as "an unanswerable argument" he quotes Galatians 2:16 which says "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." He says, "this verdict should be an end of all

strife." Far from it being the end of strife it is the renewing of it, for the statement he quotes was made by Paul after the Mosaic Law as the rule of righteousness had been superseded by the Law of Grace (Galatians 2:21). After Christ had come, belief in and acceptance of Him was the means of obtaining eternal life. It was henceforth impossible to be Justified by the Law, not because it had always been incapable of giving life, but because it had been done away with. The passage he quotes (Galatians 2:16) proves that a Jew or a Gentile who sought to be justified by keeping the Law after Christ had come was going back to a means of justification which had been superseded. It does not prove, and Paul never intended it to prove, that when it was in force the Law of Moses was any less efficacious as an object of faith and a means of justification than the Law of Christ.

Of what use is a plausible edifice of argument raised on such a rotten foundation?

Dr John Thomas had both a better understanding of Scripture and a better sense of logic than those who profess to follow him. We quote from "The Revealed Mystery," page 27, the following passage which not only exposes Mr Barling's initial blunder mentioned above, but also, in the very first sentence directly contradicts the whole proposition he has set out to prove. He says the Law could not give life; Dr Thomas says it could.

"The condition, then, to which men are required to conform if they would live for ever is, in general, to keep the Commandments. This, I say, is general, and applies equally to the past, the present and the future. But the condition is resolvable into something more particular. Hence the sentence falls to be completed, keep the Commandments of the Divine Constitution under which you live. Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had to keep the ordinances of the Patriarchal Constitution of things; Moses, Aaron and Israelites of the Siniatic Law; the Jews and Gentiles of the Roman world after Pentecost A.D.33 the Commandments of the new Institution; and the universal concourse of mankind will, from the Coming of Christ to His Kingdom, have to keep that Law of Love which is to proceed forth from Zion to every nation, tongue, kindred, tribe and people of the inhabited earth."

This seems to be sound Scripture and sound common-sense. How are we to account for the editor of "The Christadelphian" printing Mr Barling's statement: "We look in vain in the Siniatic Covenant for any such promise (of life) explicit or implicit, in reward for perfect obedience."?

The Law was based upon the Promises and was a national extension and development designed to educate and control Abraham's descendants during the period between the Patriarchal and the Christian Ages. The very essence of the Promises was that Eternal Life was offered upon evidence of faith; in the nature of things it could not have been any the less so in the Law. "Is the Law against the Promises of God? God forbid." (Galatians 3:19,21). It seems not to have occurred to the writer that if he had succeeded in proving his absurd contention, he would have consigned to eternal oblivion every prophet and godly Israelite of the Mosaic Age from Moses himself to Malachi. This is a small thing, no doubt, as compared with the urgent necessity to uphold the apostate doctrine that all flesh is sinful flesh and that the sole purpose of the Law was to prove that this sinful flesh is incapable of keeping it, but such a mockery of Divine justice and wisdom and such a flat contradiction of plain Scripture teaching will destroy both itself and its author.

We have the testimony, however, of a better authority than any Christadelphian. To the young man of Matthew 19:17 Jesus said, "If thou wilt enter into life (Zoe) keep the Commandments." Are we to believe what Mr Barling says and conclude that Jesus was intentionally misleading that young man? Or shall we conclude that he has been so carried away by his own misleading garrulity that he has lost all sense of proportion? R.Roberts, commenting on this text in "The Slain Lamb" says, "Does this mean Eternal Life? Yes. This is shown by Luke 10:35, 'This do and thou shalt live.'"

It is a curious commentary upon the Christadelphian position, that we discover that the lecture, "The Slain Lamb," originally given for the purpose of refuting the views we hold, and generally supposed to have done so, has needed to have several paragraphs omitted in subsequent reprints. It is still more strange that we have to-day a writer in "The Christadelphian" making direct contradictions of what R.Roberts (its first editor) says in a book which is regarded as a standard work on the subject of the Atonement, and which is always referred to as if it were the last word and beyond any criticism whatsoever.

We have this position then: both Dr Thomas and R.Roberts emphatically declare that the Law of Moses could give life, while Mr Barling equally emphatically declares it could not. He cites as his authority for thus giving the lie direct to his predecessors the text, "by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." Now, had this statement appeared in the Old Testament it would have been legitimate to use it so, and it would have supported his contention. Unfortunately for him, however, it is taken from the New Testament, and to try to make it retrospective is to set Scripture against itself. It is plainly stated that the Law "was holy, just and good, spiritual, and ordained unto life." (Romans 7:10,12,14). It is also affirmed that "the man which doeth these things shall live." (Leviticus 18:5; Ezekiel 20:11,13,21; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12). It is also to be remembered that the Law of Moses was for those who were under it (Romans 3:19) and obedience to its ordinances was the means whereby through faith and association with the Promises, salvation was offered to the children of Israel. But after Christ had come it was no longer the means of life and it is on that account alone that Paul wrote that no flesh could be justified by the works of the Law.

Mr Barling has thus wrested his statement from its context, misapplied it as proof that the Law could not confer life, in direct contradiction of Paul himself - not to speak of Dr Thomas and R.Roberts, and says it is the end of all strife! We have quoted their actual words; we have quoted Jesus' own affirmation that the Law could give life and, finally, if more evidence of his confusion is needed we would recommend a reading of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where he will find a long list of those who actually established for themselves a title to life under the Law.

Jesus was born a Jew and lived under the Law, living an obedient and sinless life; this single fact alone destroys Mr Barling's whole case and makes his article so much waste paper. Tempted in all points like unto His brethren, Jesus proved that strict obedience to the Law was possible; both His words and His actions indicate that the spirit of the Law was more important than the letter, and it was in this direction that the majority of the Israelites failed to attain to righteousness; "because they sought it not by (or through) faith, but as it were (merely) by the works of the Law (Romans 9:31,32; Hebrews 4:2).

But Mr Barling says that Jesus had extra power to enable Him to keep the Law; he says we are sinful flesh and cannot do what we wish. We do not hesitate to say that there is not a greater falsehood in the whole systems of apostate Christianity than this, and no worse

slander against the name of Jesus and the honour and justice of His Father has ever been uttered. Unhappily, there is evidence that many people have been misled by it and lured into the slippery path of self-deception and unbelief ending in the abyss.

It was a profound shock to read in "The Christadelphian" for December 1947 the following incredible paragraph in an article signed 'P.Watkins':-

"Sin is a product of Adamic flesh, and sin after baptism indicates a revival of the Adamic nature which we purported to destroy at baptism. Yet if we are still members of the body of Christ we are still without sin, for 'In Him is no sin.' If we are still truly in Christ, it is not we that have sinned, but it is the irrepressible Adamic nature which we have been striving to mortify that has obtruded itself - and we heartily deplore the fact. As long as we deplore our transgression - as long as they are committed despite ourselves and not because of ourselves - we remain in Christ and righteous."

This is the evil fruit of the tares sown by Mr Barling in 1946; that there has not been an outcry against it is merely an evidence of how far the poison has spread and how utterly unconscious the Christadelphian community is of the direction and speed of its declension.

"It is not we that have sinned; it is the irrepressible Adamic nature."

"As long as our sins are committed despite ourselves, we are still righteous."

"Even though we commit sin, we remain in Christ, and in righteousness."

This is one hundred per cent Roman Catholicism. These are the identical sophistries with which apostate Christianity has deluded itself for eighteen centuries. These are the lies with which Popes and Priests have excused their hypocrisies and adulteries and every kind of bloody and unspeakable crime against God and His people. With these doctrines why make a pretence of following the Nazarene? The nearest Confessional box is the place for such - not the table of remembrance. Those who have the "boldness" (we quote, or effrontery) "in the day of judgment" to affirm that their sins have been committed despite themselves or that "even though we commit sin our spiritual state is the same as if we had resisted," will discover that shame shall be the promotion of fools.

It is time to pay heed to the apostle's warning: "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:7,8). Who is the liar - John the Apostle, or Barling, Watkins & Co.? What is faith worth if it is not wrought unto works? This was the mistake Israel made. What earthly use is it to profess faith and deny it in word and works? Jesus said; "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Learned Christadelphians say it cannot be done. The Apostles and Jesus say it can be done (John 5:3; Romans 12:1; Luke 17:10), and they prove it in the best way possible, by their own example. Those who imagine that their pious professions and confessions will excuse their failure to behave themselves are self deceived.

We agreed that the Mosaic Law passed away and that in some respects it was weak; but it had a purpose as a stage in the development of man's relation to God. It expanded the primitive Edenic Law and the Promises, and it embodied in a simple form the rudiments of

the Gospel and the Christian revelation. The moral principles of the Law are incorporate in the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ.

The revelation of God has opened out in stages and has grown parallel with the development of civilization and man's moral sense. Rules of human conduct and attributes of God which can be taught in parable and precept to-day would have been beyond the intellectual range of a man living four thousand years ago. But the same fundamental principles of justice, mercy and truth could be embodied in ceremonies and ordinances and would make similar demands upon the faith and behaviour of the one as the other.

The purpose and intention of God in all the changing state of man's consciousness has been to select and reward the worthy with a better and a fuller life - with eternal life, and no polemical attempt by Mr Barling to prove that Jesus was condemned by the Law even though He was obedient to it in all points, can stand against the evidence of Scripture and reason that the Law was ordained unto Life.

F.C.Maycock.

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SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS OF THE NAZARENE FELLOWSHIP ON THE ATONEMENT.

The one sin of Adam, for which he alone was responsible, was The Sin (sing.) of the world. (John 1, 29). By it he forfeited his natural life and relationship to God. If Adam had been put to death the present race would never have existed.

The animals slain in Eden were typical of The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13. 8), and they had a double significance. By those sacrifices Adam's life was spared and he restored to his former relationship, and we all had a natural existence and also the hope of the same relationship through the redemptive work of God in Christ Jesus.

Adam was the first to benefit from Christ's sacrifice. One Man lost his life by One Sin; and One Man (Jesus Christ) gave His life in the stead of His brother. (See "My Life for the Sheep" (p. 4) on The Federal Principle).

When we read of "Remission of Sins that are past" (Romans 3. 25) or of "The transgressions that were under the first Covenant" (Hebrews 9. 15), or that it was expedient "That one man should die for the people" (John 18:14), or "for that nation" (John 11:51), these are only different phases of the same fact stated by Paul, "Christ died for our sins (plural) according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3), or by John, "For the sins of the whole world" (1 John. 2:2).

Thus, the one individual sin of Adam, the federal imputation of sin per Law which hangs over the whole race, the personal sins committed both before and under the Law of Moses and sins of individuals in Christ after baptism, are all involved and covered by THE SIN OF THE WORLD for which Christ died, and none must be either overlooked or unduly emphasized at the expense of the rest.