

A Lesson for The Teachers

Dear Friends,

I felt I wanted to write to tell you why I shall not be coming any more on Tuesday evenings. I also wished to express my thanks for those evenings I have attended and to tell you that I enjoyed some of the talks very much and I can appreciate the care, time and trouble they have taken to prepare. I learned many things I was glad to know and above all, like you I think, I find it a great relief to turn the mind from temporal things to those that are eternal and unchanging in a world that is now mostly disagreeable and frightening.

When I first saw the seminar “Reading The Bible Effectively” advertised, I wondered if it could be accomplished without resorting to doctrine. In the first session, I suppose it was easier in that the concentration was more overall and distant, although the accompanying notes contained unscriptural Christadelphian teaching. But when we came to a close study of Luke, I thought it might become impossible to avoid doctrine, and in your case, Christadelphian doctrine. And so it proved. You were certainly on difficult ground in week 3 with the Virgin Birth and the things you said that I did not agree with and again the conclusions in the notes were unscriptural and based on Christadelphian dogma. Not the Bible

For instance the presumption that Christ had a divine as well as a human side to His nature because God was His Father. God was Adam’s Father too and Adam did not have a human mother to account for his undoubted humanity. But week 4 was the clincher for me and the final straw. From another Speaker we got the false doctrine of original sin or sin-in-the-flesh clearly enunciated, when he likened leprosy with the sin that is in us all, children included, and which none of us can help. This is utterly unscriptural and unacceptable to me. I have heard it so often before, I do not want to hear it anymore if I can avoid it.

It was revealing that one member of the class asked the question – I hope I paraphrase her correctly – “What did Christ’s death achieve, or how does His death save us, when human nature is still the same after, as before He died for us?” A good question. I hope she was more impressed by your answer than I was. I should have asked a question myself, or made some comment in order to give the correct view, but I did not think quickly enough and to be quite honest, my first reaction was to get out of the room because I found the views set forth about human nature etc. so abhorrent.

I have never been a Christadelphian although I went to their Sunday School at Ridgeacre Road, Quinton when I was a girl. You probably realise that most of my father’s side of the family were and still are Christadelphians. For that reason I have been witness to, or part of the controversy, all my life, over what Christadelphians believe and what I know to be the truth.

I have heard both sides of the arguments on the reasons for the Virgin Birth, the nature of man, the nature of Christ and the Atonement, from my youth up. I know what you are expected to believe as a Christadelphian as well as you know it yourselves. I doubt if you can return the compliment about my views, so I should like to redress the balance as briefly and succinctly as I can.

Many Christadelphians feel bitterly insulted to be charged with sharing the apostate doctrines of Roman Catholics, but the facts are undeniable. I admit that longstanding tradition, supported by a superficial reading of a few passages of scripture and encouraged by too great readiness to blame their faults and failures upon our inherited nature, leads some people to conclude that human nature is full of inherent evil. But true believers are expected to exercise a God-given reason and discrimination, and not to read superficially or be led astray by tradition, while the very fact that it was a Pope, seeking excuse for his own evil ways, who introduced into Christianity the theory that Adam’s sin is supposed to have defiled his nature and become transmitted to all his descendants, should make us examine it especially carefully.

It is quite illogical to conclude that because wickedness appears to be universal therefore there must be some kind of evil principle or bias towards sin in man, and there are two simple arguments to the contrary, either of which is sufficient to prove it false.

The first is that if we have such a bias, then God who created us or caused us to inherit a nature with that disability would really be responsible for all the sin in the world.

The second is that Jesus, with exactly the same nature and tendencies as ourselves, was without sin.

It is no answer to say that Adam sinned and we merely inherit in our flesh the effects of his sin: there is no escape from the conclusion that if we are born into the world with some evil principle or bias in our nature which causes us to sin, or makes it inevitable that we do sin, then it would be impossible for God in justice either to hold us guilty or still less punish us. While a Creator who in such circumstances says to us "Be ye therefore perfect as I am perfect," would be a very monster of deceit and injustice: if as Christadelphians assert, sin runs in the blood one could as fairly blame a child born blind for not being able to see as expect one with sin in his blood to be good.

We have to acknowledge the fact that we are all under sin and in bondage but we have to understand what these statements imply. They in fact relate to the federal principle whereby, for the purposes of salvation and deliverance of a vast multitude of people from their personal sins, the one first sin committed by Adam is regarded as hanging over all men and the legal situation resulting from it and involving all enlightened believers.

If it is true, and we know it is so, (1) that Jesus was the same human flesh and blood as we are, and (2) that He was capable of experiencing the same temptations as we do, and (3) that He did indeed suffer such temptations and overcame them all, then it follows that His life, His experience and His example prove beyond question that there is no evil or bias toward evil in human nature which it is impossible for any other man to overcome.

I have heard this argument put to countless Christadelphians in my time, they generally explain that we are overlooking the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, and that on this account He was specially strengthened to do what no other man could do. If such was truly the case, then Jesus was not really like us; He might have looked like a man but He could not be truly a member of our race, the Son of Man. For if He was specially helped or strengthened, then it is not true to say He was tempted in all points like as we are. You may choose to believe that our Saviour was a hybrid mixture of human and divine, which is what the seminar notes suggest, it was also put forward in the talk given on the Virgin Birth and that he was endowed by His Father with a power to resist temptation which no ordinary man can call upon, or you may believe that Jesus was an ordinary man actuated and supported by Divine Power as a puppet is by strings, but if so you should honestly admit that you believe in a Christ unknown to the Bible.

Such theories contradict the very fundamentals of truth laid down in the Scriptures which record Jesus' life and experience.

All will agree that natural death results from man being corruptible; and it follows that man was either corruptible when he was created or his nature was changed to make him corruptible when he sinned. Christadelphians believe the latter according to Clause III of their Statement of Faith, but it is certain that there is no mention in Scripture of any such process of implantation, and if it took place it must mean that before he sinned man was of some superior nature. Yet there are only two natures known to the Bible, the natural, with the life in the blood, and the incorruptible, with the life in the spirit. The fact is clearly that man was created exactly as he is now, scripturally "a living soul" and that means a living person of the same breath of life and nature as all other orders of animal life.

If we are asked the question, "Why is the animal creation corruptible" or "why do animals die at the end of their natural life?" does anyone reply "Because Adam sinned?" It needs no more than a moment's clear thinking to recognize that all living things, man included are part of a natural order of creation which within its limits is very good.

I know how Christadelphians revere Dr.Thomas. In one of the last articles he wrote entitled "Our Terrestrial System before the Fall" the following passage occurs - "Death and corruption then is the fundamental law of the six days; seasons of decay and death were institutions existing before the fall. 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 the history of the six days." Bible echoes?

The explanation for the Fall of Man is undoubtedly a matter of Law. A tremendous change occurred certainly, but it was a legal change not a physical one. The change was in Adam's relationship to God. From being an obedient son living in harmony with his Creator, by a simple act of disobedience he alienated himself. This changed relationship is typified by the expulsion from Eden.

It is this alienation or estrangement from God which Adam incurred for himself and his descendants. But just as a child is not held to be responsible to the Laws of England before he has reached the years of discretion, so men, even though born under sin are not held responsible to law of sin and death until they are enlightened. This is what is implied by such Scriptures as "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Galatians 3:22).

In 5th Romans this truth is put in several different ways. "Death passed on all men." "Death reigned even over them that had not sinned." "Through the offence of one many be dead." "Judgment by one to condemnation." "By one man's offence death reigned." "By one man's disobedience many were constituted sinners." "Sin hath reigned unto death." To suppose that in these passages Paul is referring to natural death and to personal sins is to credit him with a very poor a poor ability to express his meaning. Every one contains the idea of law and is only understandable from a legal point of view. In the following context, each one is paralleled by its reverse. The removal of the legal disability by faith in Christ's sacrifice and consequently freedom from the power of sin and death as its wages. It is because the reign of sin is, for the present, a legal matter, that those who choose can be delivered from it by an act of faith through baptism.

Adam is our federal head; he represents us all and his one sin involved him and us with him in the condemnation which our own failures incur. The period of man's bondage was his whole life; the price of his redemption was the life paid by his brother. Jesus therefore paid with His own life the debt which Adam incurred and which was still outstanding.

Why could Jesus suffer the penalty of sin without perishing whereas Adam or any other man who suffered death for sin would perish?

There are two factors involved. The first is that Jesus was sinless; therefore He was able to suffer death, pour out His natural life in the blood and then rise again in the life of the Spirit. But if Adam had borne his own penalty he would have perished eternally, for there was no ground, provision or occasion for him to rise. It is eternal death that Christ's sacrifice saves us from not natural death. Salvation which commenced with Adam secured the very existence of every human creature. Thus it is in a very real sense that Jesus is "The Saviour of all men (but) especially of them that believe." If the present life is worth having, and who will deny it, every human creature owes it to Jesus. This strange yet obvious truth has never been preached since apostolic times.

But there is another and equally vital factor in the explanation of why Jesus was able to take upon Himself the burden of sinners, death and yet not perish. Since all men are included in the Adamic federal head and therefore, as shown in 5th Romans, legally estranged from God, it was impossible for any man in that position, whatever his personal goodness may have been, to deliver anyone else.

How was it possible for Jesus to escape the legal bondage and alienation which Adam incurred and which involves all of us? The explanation is in the facts of His birth. It was to make the Redeemer of the race a near kinsman of the one to be ransomed but at the same time free from the bondage which held Adam and his progeny. Jesus was a new creation begotten by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary. It was this necessity, AND THIS ALONE, which required that Jesus should derive His life not from the condemned line, but anew from the source, direct from God.

If Jesus had been a son of Joseph He would have been no different physically or in nature from what He was, but His life would then have come direct to Him from Adam and would have been a condemned or forfeited life. Had that been the case, it would have been impossible for Him to offer Himself as a sacrifice however willing He might have been, or for such a sacrifice to have been accepted.

But we know that Jesus was not the son of Joseph. His life was newly created by the Holy Spirit for the sole and especial purpose of bringing into the world a man related to Adam, of identical flesh and blood nature, but whose life was not derived from the alienated Adamic source.

If I have made my views clear you will certainly realize the chasm that lies between what Christadelphians teach and what I believe to be the truth. Because of this, I can't be present and remain passive while things I know to be false are offered as Bible truths. The form that the seminar takes doesn't offer a real opportunity to discuss alternative points of view so I don't see any purpose in attending anymore.

It might be of interest, particularly to one of you, to know that his one time Sunday School teacher, Russell Gregory was expelled from Erdington meeting some years ago for holding these same views.

I send my good wishes to you both.

Sincerely Helen (Brady).
February 1998

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In March 1998, I received the following reply:-

Dear Helen, Thank you for your letter and for informing us of your decision to no longer attend the seminars.

I was aware of some of your family views of the Scriptures, and I know there has been much argument over the years and we know all about the Russell Gregory affair.

Argument is something I am not prepared to engage in with you, it has all been said before, the gap (as you put it) is still as wide, for us the Scriptures are for putting ones trust in, and living by, no arguing about. We “will earnestly contend for the faith” without being contentious.

In any case, if you do not accept that Jesus was the Son of God in the unique way the Scripture tells us, as you said in your letter, then your argument is not with us, it is with God Himself who declares on many occasions that He is.

It has been good to have met you, and the next time we might meet, we can do so cheerfully, without any argument between us.

The coming Kingdom of God and the Judgment Seat of Christ will determine who is right. I will leave the arguments for his decision.

For our part, and to the best of our understanding, we have complied to our Saviour’s wishes and requirements by being baptised into His name.

I sincerely hope, in all your views that you have in Jesus a Saviour.

Sincerely,