

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 119

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Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

After the second world war almost all the empires of the world broke up with peoples claiming independence to rule themselves. If I remember correctly, someone counted over one hundred new countries were formed during the late 1940's and early 1950's. It was in the Spring of 1948 that Israel also formed her own Government and began ruling from Haifa. Many believed that the parable of Jesus, recorded in Luke 21:29-31, was a prophecy being fulfilled; "Behold the fig-tree (Israel), and all the trees (Other countries); when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

There is now another surge for independence amongst suppressed peoples. This is most noticeable in Communist Europe where peoples are struggling to form new and independent governments, and once again we wonder just how close is the Kingdom of God. After Jesus gave this prophecy to His disciples He went on to tell them that "This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." And along with that promise He gave the warning, "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray ye always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:34-36.

Ray and Eileen join with me in thanking you for all your kind letters, sending Good Wishes and expressing appreciation for our efforts in continuing the Circular Letter. We are very conscious of our Heavenly Father's blessing and know it is He who gives the increase. All we ask is for knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and wisdom to serve Him as we ought. May this blessing be on all who seek, knock and ask.

With Love to all in Jesus. Russell.

The Creation : Adam : Sin : Death By Sin : Death Reigns By Sin.

Whatever evolutionists think or teach, they cannot explain the source and origin of those things upon which their theories are based. That source and origin we believe to be He who has chosen to reveal Himself in the books of the Bible by holy men moved by the operations of His Holy Spirit. Therefore the Scriptures are not for the evolutionist, nor the natural minded man; they must be spiritually discerned by those people who are exercised by faith resulting from belief in the Word of God, as the writer to the Hebrews, chapter 11

states, especially in verse 1 and verse 6. If we are of this class and in company with those mentioned in the whole of chapter eleven, then we believe the Genesis account (Chapter 1, verse 1), "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." We do not therefore question, "how?", but merely arrive at verse two where at some period of the earth's history "the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." To the evolutionist and unbeliever God speaks through His chosen Prophet Isaiah, chapter 40, verses 12 to 17.

My following considerations will not be a denial therefore of what is written for our admonition and learning, but a question of, what is written, and, "How readest thou?"

The Genesis account of six days of creation involving creatures of the waters and fowls of the air, cattle and beasts and creeping things, the herb of the field and trees with fruit, all for nourishment and preservation of this natural order of things, and the day of rest from all the Creator's work, is a record to be read with the utmost logic and discrimination by comparing scripture with scripture, and I believe the "key" is supplied in the record of Genesis, and the door fully opened for viewing, through God speaking to the fathers by the Prophets and in the last days speaking by His Son whom He has appointed heir of all things, and on account of whom He created the earth and its inhabitants.

Genesis means origin, so if we want an account of Creation we go to the first book in the Bible which records the origin of creation, not to Psalm 90 or 2 Peter, where the writers are stating and comparing the Majesty and Power of the Creator in contrast with man's feeble and corruptible limited nature; so that a 24 hour day to man is something to be reckoned on his standard, but to God it appears as almost nothing, because He is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalm 90 and 2 Peter 3:8. A thousand years as a day. Let us feign ignorance of these statements when reading Genesis and we shall be more able to find the "key" as to whether creation took 6,000 years or 6 days as we understand it of 24 hours, but remember we are not talking about Genesis 1:1, but about things that were already in existence as regards the universe, with the exception of the animal life including man, herbs and trees. The Spirit of God in motion was essential. There must be Light and there was Light by the utterance of His Word. So the forming began to take shape out of the existing void, but in proper order of rotation by Him that worketh all things by the counsel of His own Will. To arrive at an understanding of what a day means to man and what it actually is by his own experience, we are informed in Genesis 1:14 to 18, concerning the lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and to be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, the stars also. Now, from all this data man has learned to compile a calendar and he assumes its accuracy on the basis of what God has decreed, though he dislikes admitting to Him as the God of Abraham revealed in the Bible. We all accept a day as of 24 hours duration, though part of it consists of light and part of it darkness, I say part because it varies in different parts of the world. There are people who have taken the view that creation took 6,000 years, a thousand years for each day recorded in Genesis, but is there evidence in Genesis to prove this? I think there is not, but again I am not referring to the beginning when the heavens and the earth were first created. Nevertheless, it is not for man to limit the power of God, the Creator; to do such a thing we compare Him with ourselves and by our own finite and limited comprehension. Let us remember that He is answerable to none but His own attributes which He declared to Moses in the Mount. And in another place He declared, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me..." 1 Samuel 15:11. Again, in Numbers 23:19, speaking through Balaam to Balak, king of Moab, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" But we should not take these declarations out of their context, as we find it teaches us in Psalm 106:44 & 45 and Lamentations 3:32. God does not repent or answer to a higher authority, but in accordance with His attribute of Mercy. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying. Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee," Hebrews 6:13 & 14. Let us read Romans 9, and then we can consider His challenge, "Who art thou, O man, to dispute with God, does he not have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion?" Let us take account of this when we read the record of creation, and God's words to Adam in the Genesis account, realising with the Apostle James, in chapter 2 verse 13, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgement." God told Adam to have dominion over all creation, but we learn that this, and his freedom of the Garden of Eden, depended on his continued relationship and affinity with God by obedience to the conditions. Therefore God set before him

“life” or “death” for we know that death is the opposite of life, and the life Adam experienced was the life we experience now, in bodies which are of the earth, earthy, capable of dying and of inflicted accelerated death. (1 Corinthians 15).

The conditions to Adam involved freedom to eat of all the trees but one. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, “thou shalt not eat of it for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. It was not poisonous. Did Eve realise this because she had witnessed its fruit being eaten by some other species and no harm resulted? Did this move her to thinking within herself, “Ye shall not surely die”? And seeing it as something to make one wise, which was to her a desirable thing, she partook of it and gave also to her husband and he deliberately ate of it? I myself have often wondered, why? Could he visualise the loss of a beloved wife whom God had given him that he might not be alone, and decided to suffer the penalty with her, and so ate of the fruit? This is only conjecture, but the fact is, they both sinned and Adam, having been the first to receive God’s conditions of life in the garden, and all human life being in his loins by virtue of the power of fertilisation and reproduction through the woman, he was held to be more responsible. The sentence of death was upon them by their own actions in the day they sinned. So, in the day they ate thereof they were legally dead, their life was forfeited to that which they had allowed to become their master. Now would Adam have regarded a day as a thousand years? There is reason to think he did not, but if there is reason to think otherwise on the basis of Psalm 90, then there is every reason to believe that it took the Creator a thousand years to form Adam from the dust of the ground; also but a few minutes of eating the forbidden fruit (eating thou shall eat) but a thousand years in which to die, which would make him in effect, a “God-tolerated” sinner of almost a thousand years, and without redemption, reconciliation or hope. This indeed is Adam’s position on the basis of the belief that natural decay and death is the penalty and which passed upon all men by Adam’s sin; a sentence which cannot be removed this side of the grave apart from unconditional forgiveness from God and miraculous change of nature from the nature held to be physically condemned. What a hopeless condition to be in. Yet, to hold on to and establish the creeds of men, people love to have it so!

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a iron, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12 to 16 and 25). The wise man in Ecclesiastes 9 sums up the present situation, that one event happens to the righteous and to the wicked, but while joined to the living there is Hope, and this Hope concerns the Way of Life. (Verse 4). His advice in verses 7 to 10 is most appropriate and acceptable, “God now accepteth thy words” - “Let thy garments be always white... Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.”

Sad to say, too many use such references as these to refute the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and reject the advice to work righteousness (in garments of white obtained), through the exercise of knowledge and wisdom. May these thoughts be helpful and bring forth some constructive points that we may all continue to grow in knowledge, understanding and wisdom unto the perfect man Christ Jesus who was full of grace and Truth. So that we may realise and declare with the Prophet John the Baptist, “And of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace,” (John 1:16). Nakedness was not regarded by Adam or Eve as shameful, for God had created them so, and the scripture declares, “They were naked but were not ashamed.” Was there something in the unlawful act of partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which was meant to trigger off, as it were, a consciousness of sin committed, and reflected in an added knowledge of nakedness and shame before God? What took place later in the dialogue between the Lord God and Adam seems to indicate this. “Who told thee that thou wast naked, hast thou eaten of the tree?” Adam could not cover or atone for his own sin. The covering was of God’s provision through the shedding of blood. It was left to them to keep those garments lest they be found naked again.

Our garments have also been provided by the grace of God, and Jesus takes up this fact in Revelation 16:15, Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

Yours in the hope of His coming, Brother Phil Parry.

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37).

If a person is convinced that the Holy Spirit is not available to them today then they are not going to thirst after it. The loss is great, for it is the Holy Spirit that leads us into all Truth, for we are all taught of God. (Isaiah 54:13). It is not flesh and blood that reveals Jesus to us; who He is, or what He has accomplished on our behalf. It is the God of heaven and earth, through His Spirit. “No man can come unto me,” said Jesus, “Except the Father... draw him.” (John 6:44). And “no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (John 4:10). And the water that Jesus Christ gives becomes a “well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (Verse 14).

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11-13).

CHAT SECTION

The main subjects raised under this section have been, briefly: 1) Raised to die again. 2) The mark of the Beast. 3) Should we leave Christadelphians alone?

The following correspondence has been received:

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

I was particularly interested in the questions and the answers given in the Chat Section of the December 1989 C/Letter.

I was rather surprised at the way the first question was put by a Sister, especially when using an incomplete quotation from Scripture and thereby wresting it out of its context. I assume she may have been quoting from Ezekiel 18:23, as follows, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord; and not that he should return from his ways and live?” The people under discussion in this chapter were in covenant relationship with God and responsible to His Law. It was His desire that they should respect it, for He had greater pleasure in this than in sacrifices and wilful rebellion. Even as Jesus said, “There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.” We must realise that many who died under the Mosaic Law will not be raised to further judgement having already died judicially. There may be exceptions according to the circumstances but only God is the Judge of that. With all due respect to the Sister concerned, I would emphasise respect for the context when quoting from Scripture. Here is an example from the “Concordant Sect.” They quote part of 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not willing that any should perish...” then they say that none will ultimately perish because God must stand by His Will. The verse stands to be completed - “but that all should come to repentance.” God declares His Will but leaves men the option or free-will to respect and honour it.

I agree with some of the reasons Brother Harold has given but when it comes to the use of the term “eternal death” I have always expressed my dislike for using it, though we may realise what is really meant is “oblivion” or extinction of any further life. Again I mention the phrase “Eternal Death” for the reason it

poses the question arising from 1 Corinthians 15:26, and Revelation 21:4. If there is such a thing as eternal death, how can death be destroyed, that there should be no more death? “Concordant” one-track minded people are difficult to convince once they are set in their minds; they do not always rightly divide the Word but bend and manipulate it to fit their pre-conceived theories.

Further on in his reply, Brother Dawson seems to make a distinction between the wicked and those people who may not have had the chance to hear the Gospel of salvation and act upon it, yet he mentions the Potter as having the power over the clay to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour, then follows with the quotation from Revelation 20, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the end of the thousand years,” and this he says, is to give those a chance (who had not heard the Gospel down through the ages) to hear it, understand it, or reject it. I cannot agree with Brother Dawson by reason of what the Scriptures and the Epistles reveal and especially where Paul speaks on predestination, which incidentally, does not rule out belief, faith and works. My view on the basis of Scripture is that if there are any up unto the second coming of Christ (to raise the dead ‘In Him’ and change the ‘faithful living’ at that time) who have not heard the Gospel during their life time of natural existence purchased for them by the blood of Christ, then it is because God (the Potter) has no interest in them, and that some whom He does use are vessels without honour and are thrown aside. So we must also take heed that we are vessels of honour meet for the Master’s use.

As I see it and read it, “The rest of the dead,” are those who lived not again as those did whom John saw living again, and spoken of as the “first resurrection,” or the firstfruits unto God - they are Christ’s at His coming. The rest of the dead, who will be amenable to the Judgement before the Great White Throne of God, will be raised corruptible for that purpose and subject to the second death. But some who survive the events at the second coming of Jesus, example: children of irresponsible age, and perhaps some among the nations who are saved, by the establishment of the Millennial Age, will hear and believe and have their names in the Book of Life which is opened as another book, and not included in the books of judgement.

I could add much more, but to accept Brother Dawson’s view would mean that John will be prophesying again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings after all things have been made new and the tabernacle of God is with men (Revelation 21:3), and the kingdom of Christ has been delivered up to His Father and God is all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:23-26). There is a class we know of that will not have a second chance. (See Isaiah 26:10-14).

Sincerely your Brother in the Hope of Life, P. Parry.

Another correspondent writes:

Now concerning the resurrection of the sinner to judgement, I am sorry, but the resurrection, followed by judgement, followed by the second death of those who knowingly rejected God, is what the Bible teaches. This is stated clearly in Daniel 12:2, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” And again, John 5:28, 29, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” So this is plain enough. God’s ways are higher than our ways, and it is not for us to question God. True, God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should repent. This last part is the important one. If a person knowing God’s laws defiantly rejects them, he has only himself to blame if he wakes up in the resurrection to find himself condemned to the second, and very final death.

This same correspondent also writes concerning the Mark of the Beast:

Now the Book of Revelation is, as we know, a book of symbols. But just for once, perhaps the only instance in this book, its meaning is literal. In Germany early in the middle ages, under Charlemagne (Charles the Great) those who wished to acquire any position of authority had to put a mark of the cross on their foreheads, or their right hand. This you find in Robert Roberts “Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse.” (End of his eighth lecture dealing with Revelation 13). Now as for the spiritual meaning, this is some matter of speculation. But I think it means the practices of the Apostate Churches of Sunday observances, and the keeping of Christmas and Easter as religious holidays. All these rituals were originally heathen practices,

appropriated by the early church as Christian. The true Sabbath day is Saturday. Sunday, as the name suggests, was devoted to worship of the sun-god. The word "Easter" is derived from "Ishtar", the queen of heaven, spoken of in Jeremiah. The Easter cross-buns originate from the cakes the worshipers of the queen of heaven baked in honour of her. Christmas, I think, originated again from sun-worship. Early observers of the heavenly bodies noticed the days just beginning to get longer again, so this was an occasion for rejoicing. These customs, more than anything else, constitute in my opinion the spiritual mark of the beast.

And concerning the Christadelphians we have received the following;

"Are we too involved with Christadelphians? They once had the truth, why not remind them?"

Although the sincerity and the intellectual ability of the leaders of the Christadelphians may not be questioned, their written statements can, principally because they insist on repeating doctrines they believe they have adduced from the Scriptures, but in fact, have their origins in the teachings of the Mother Church.

From time to time their early leader writers stated the plain Scriptural truths concerning the nature of man, his relationship to God, and the nature of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even today there appears the occasional statement consistent with some of the early leaders but by and large the truth of their early understanding has withered and died. The fact that some of their doctrines stem from the apostate church reveal an obduracy akin to blindness, particularly the concept of flesh being cursed by an abstract noun. Many expositors have attempted to explain why the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, and with many words they laid on their brethren and sisters "burdens hard to bear." But it is to be noted that Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts scripturally identified man's nature and his relationship to God, and others too, have from time to time arrived at the same understanding, but have been unable to retain its purity and beauty and have let it slip.

When seeking to learn many have been able to express some of the best scriptural definitions to be found anywhere; for example, Dr Thomas wrote:

"A gracious, merciful and loving heavenly Father who first purchased us from the law of sin and death at the expense of His beloved Son, and put us on probation for immortality."

And again he wrote:

"Redemption means to buy back, hence it is a release for a ransom: all who become God's servants are therefore released from a former lord by purchase, the Purchaser is God, and the price or ransom is the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Robert Roberts wrote:

"The phrase sin-in-the-flesh is metonymical, it is not the expression of a literal element or principle found in physical organisation, literally sin is disobedience, or an act of rebellion. The impulses (temptation) that lead to this reside in the flesh and are therefore come to be called by the name of the act to which they give birth; the impulses which lead to sin existed before transgression as much as they did afterwards; there is no such thing as essential evil or sin. Some imagine there was a change in the nature of Adam when he transgressed, there is no evidence of this whatsoever, 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."

Dr Thomas wrote:

"..the sins committed by others and borne in his own body on the Cross, as testified by 1 Peter 2:24."

Again, he wrote:

“Death and corruption then, with reproduction, is a fundamental Law of the physical system of the six days. From these premises it will be seen that we dissent from our correspondent’s notion that all creation became corrupt, by which we understand him to mean ‘constitutionally impregnated with corruptibility at the fall.’ We believe that the change was moral not physical.”

And again:

“Now the blood of Jesus Christ was more precious than the life blood of any other man. If it had not been so, it would have been inadequate to the purchase for the world . . . The blood of Jesus was the only blood of all the generations of Adam, that had not been generated by the lust of the flesh; Jesus was an unblemished man, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

J. J. Hadley wrote:

“As regards His moral relation to the Father, He was under no curse whatsoever. He was not in the position of guilty man, who is outside Eden, and can approach the Father only with a petition for forgiveness. His relation to the Father was not that of one alienated from Him as was Adam and all his descendants. He was from the beginning, Holy, a beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased.”

H. Fry wrote:

“Make His death a penalty due to Himself personally, and you destroy both aspects of His loving obedience, for there is no virtue whatever in submitting to a penalty legally due to oneself.”

The Editor of the Christadelphian, 1965 wrote:

“Human nature is not sin, human nature is not the devil, it was not human nature that was condemned but sin, sin is lawlessness.”

Many others have written in similar vein, consistent with the clear statements in the Scriptures, but it is almost inconceivable that the following contrary statements should abound:

“Human flesh is wholly evil.”

“The devil, human nature, sin-in-the-flesh, we know to be synonymous terms.”

“Jesus condemned the human nature He received from His mother.”

“Human flesh is a body of sin, diabolos was located in the body of Jesus.”

“His death was undoubtedly for Himself as a physical cleansing of destroying the devil or sin in His own flesh.”

“He was as unclean as those He came to save.”

“The implantation of a physical law of decay, which works out dissolution and death.”

“It pleased God to require the ceremonial condemnation of this sin nature in crucifixion in the person of a righteous possessor of it.”

“Christ had to repudiate and destroy His human body because it was the nature of fallen man.”

“Jesus did not bear the penalty of sin. He merely suffered death.”

“There hung the devil dead.”

“Sinful flesh is flesh full of sin.”

“Jesus possessed a nature under condemnation to death so there was no violation of justice in His death, it was not wrong for Him to die, the death of Jesus was just.”

“How could Jesus die for sin if there was no sin there?”

“Sin ran in every drop of His blood.”

“He died because He bore our sinful nature.”

We are left wondering why such doctrines are apparently accepted by many Christadelphians who surely have nothing to fear from the truth.

Why do we press for openness and discussion? Because we see they once taught and occasionally still teach the stated Scriptural truths, plainly and simply. Herein is the tragedy we would seek to remedy, and it is a matter of regret that so many facets of the redemption of man, brought about by the loving kindness of our heavenly Father and the greatest love a man may have, i.e. sacrificial love, are diminished by their philosophy.

All the facts are clearly stated in scripture, beginning in Genesis in the Garden of Eden with the law stated, the consequences pronounced, guilt because of disobedience, the necessity of the shedding of blood to provide an acceptable covering for sin to prevent the sentence being carried out, and in God's mercy, a new relationship between man and his Creator, with promises. Later, the Law of Moses was brought in to enable those reconciled by sacrifices to reciprocate and show their appreciation of His love in the keeping of His laws which He said were "for their good."

All these and more are manifested in the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, making an end of sacrifices and revealing a loving heavenly Father, abundant in mercy.

As a guide to our appreciation we would quote these well known passages:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24).

"But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

(Hebrews 4:15). "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls." (Leviticus 17:11).

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Hebrews 9:14).

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18.

"Ye denied the Holy One and the Just... and killed the Prince of life." Acts 3:14,15.

"The prince of this world (the devil)... hath nothing in me." John 14:30.

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28.

"For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things.... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19.

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24.

"Greater love have no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. John 10:17.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself, I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again, this commandment have I received of my Father." John 10:18.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." John 10:11.

"Who gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Timothy 2:6.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood." Ephesians 1:7.

"He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." 1 John 3:5. Also Isaiah 53 and many more.

The principles of sacrifice for sin required by God are clear, well defined and established throughout the Law; for example:

"Your lamb shall be without blemish a male of the first year." Exodus 12:5.

"Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish.... whatsoever hath a blemish shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you." Leviticus 22:19,20.

"And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?" Malachi 1:8.

"And if there be any blemish there in., thou shall not sacrifice it unto the Lord." Deuteronomy 15:21.

The reason for God's severity in establishing the quality of the sacrifices to be offered is perceived when we realise that all those offerings typified the work, character, the person and the life of the One in whom there was no sin; who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and altogether lovely.

This is why we cannot leave Christadelphians alone; we are close to many of them, so let us be a help to those who have to leave them.

Name withheld by request.

Choice and Action

Following upon the many blessings and curses as listed in Deuteronomy 28, we have recorded in chapter 30 verse 15:

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.” As we know, these blessings and curses were set before the children of Israel during their wilderness journey under Moses. But it was not very long after, under the leadership of Joshua we read in Joshua 24:22, many who must have remembered Moses had to make a choice:

“And Joshua said unto the people. Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said. We are witnesses.” Not many generations later Israel had fallen badly as we read in 1 Kings 18, during the time of Elijah the prophet, verse 21 and 39:

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

“And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord he is the God.” They had decided, but more was required of them. Choice needs to be followed by action. In the majority of cases these words need to be associated with each other. Choice without action means little. Verse 40:

“And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Ki-shon, and slew them there.”

From birth to death choice plays a large part in all humans during their natural life. In our very early stages it is our parents who have to decide many things for us. But as we proceed through the many stages of development, as children, then on to out teens until we become of age, men and women by which time the responsibility becomes ours to choose and act according to our choice. This applies not only to our natural life, but also to our Spiritual Life. In the case of the former it can relate to our aim in life, our trade or profession which we wish to follow but at the end it is death which takes its toll. Disaster, however, can take its toll as so often when a partner in life or business has a different aim. But in the case of our Spiritual life, according as to how we choose, the result can be a full and satisfying one in the Kingdom of God. In having to make our choice in this case we refer to the Book of Books whose Author is God.

Examples abound in the Scriptures of individuals who made a choice and followed with action. Some were good, others made for material gain were a disappointment. I now will briefly look at a few examples; many cases more than one person was involved in having to make a choice and to take action.

ADAM and EVE. God provided the subject for the decision. OBEY or NOT. Genesis 2:9, “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.”

Verses 16 and 17, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 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; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

This prohibition was fully understood as we see from chapter 3 verse 3, it was indeed as God had said, pleasant to the eyes, good for food, to be desired, as is wisdom; but this tree held a prohibition, “Thou shalt not eat of it;” disobedience meant death. God is not mocked. Eve’s choice, her action, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. It may not have occurred that they fully realized what the penalty meant, possibly until they had seen the animal slain to obtain skins for their covering. They had tasted of God’s provision in Eden; they were alive and in what is often referred to as in a condition of paradise, having natural life. What more did they want? They were turned out but still lived. The tree of life was still in Eden but beyond their reach unless God provided a means whereby they could obtain forgiveness. This God has done through His love for man. John 3:16:-

“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 tree of life still exists. Revelation 22:2, “... and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life...”

In our consideration of choice we now move on to look at Abraham and Lot. Terah, who lived in Ur of the Chaldees, was the father of Abraham, Nahor and Harran. From ancient records it appears the inhabitants of this area worshipped idols, as is seen in Joshua 24:2. In no way is it to be thought that Abraham was engaged in this idol worship; he no doubt was looking for something more satisfying. Harran also had a son, Lot. All remained at the family home. External writers give the impression that they were well off having much cattle and goods. After Harran died it seems Abraham cared for Lot. But a call came to Abraham to leave his home and father, as seen in Genesis 12:1 & 4:

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred ... unto a land that I will shew thee, So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him.”

We see from these verses that Abram departed. He acted. Indeed it seems that when he and Lot departed they took with them cattle which they must have divided, along with some of their employees, and they prospered, so much so, that they could not continue together as a single unit. It is then that we see the difference in their choice and actions. Abram believed God that he and his family would be blessed. Lot, it seems, when they had to divide, chose material advantage and acted accordingly. Genesis 13:8:-

“And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen.” Verse 10 “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere... “

Very attractive for cattlemen. But where did it end? In Sodom, where he became a householder, as it appears from Genesis 19:2. Surely he had made a wrong choice. Very little more is heard of Lot after Sodom and Gomorrah. What finally happened to him we are not told. But he was very unpopular with the people of Sodom, as shown in verse 9 of chapter 19:-

“And they said, Stand back... this one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge... and they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break down the door.”

Next we move on some hundred years or more, to when the Children of Israel were settled in the Land, to the time of the Book of Ruth. The story of Ruth is well known among most Christians, by whom it is looked upon as a great love story; but on further consideration, we can find much more in it than just a love story. From the early chapters of the Book of Ruth we are told that there was a famine in the land:-

“...and a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.” It was not long before we read Elimelech, Naomi’s husband died and she was left, and her two sons. What was she to do? We shall soon see that a wrong choice as to action was made: but we shall see that because of maybe mother realised she had brought about something which was wrong and other things declared by God to be unacceptable for the Children of Israel. As was customary at that time, the parents played a large part in the question of suitable marriage partners for their children as is still the

practice in our own country, among many of the immigrants who live in England. Naomi, in her distress among other things at the time, may have overlooked two things. Deuteronomy 7:3:-

“Neither shalt thou make marriage with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.”

Speaking, of course, of foreigners. Deuteronomy 23:3:-

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord even to their tenth generation...”

The two sons of Naomi were married to Moabite women, even as Solomon in later times took wives of those he chose among the various nations, many of whom worshipped idols, and in some instances he built them places for their idols. In Nehemiah 13:26 we are told:-

“Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things... even him did outlandish women cause him to sin.” Solomon, sad to say, however, is not among those listed in Hebrews 11.

But to return to Naomi and her daughters-in-law; she must have often spoken to them of the God of Israel and the many laws and practices in force among the people of her own land. Knowing of these things may have been the reason she suggested they stay in Moab, among their own race, when she returned to Israel as she was about to do, having heard that the famine was over. For even if she was still of a childbearing age it would be many years before any further sons she might beget when she did return to Israel. Far too many years to wait for them to grow up, and replace Mahlon and Chilion, their husbands who had both died. Ruth 1:10 & 11, “And they said. Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again my daughters; why will ye go with me? In other words, Think again, my daughters. They did. Having made their final choice, they acted differently. Orpah relented, which meant she fumed her back on Naomi and the God of Israel, but Ruth’s choice and action was very different. Naomi said to her, in effect. See your sister has decided to go back to her own people; you do the same and marry one of your own. Ruth 1:16,

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” Verse 17, “Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried ... if ought but death part thee and me.” Verse 19, “So they two went until they came to Bethlehem...” Can we imagine the joy of Naomi? And the lesson for us - Orpah, a Gentile, returned to her people and we hear no more of her in the Scriptures. Ruth, also a Gentile, in her day accepted the God of Israel, went along with her mother-in-law, and what blessings, she received we well know. In due time Ruth begat Obed: and Obed begat Jesse: and Jesse begat David. Ruth 4:16, out of Naomi’s sorrow (call me Mara) what joy:

“And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it.”

We now turn to Ruth chapter 3, where we come to the early stages of the climax of events; the harvest must have been nearly over and preparations would be in hand for the gathering of the labourers who would, along with their employer, rejoice and partake of a feast prepared for them: shall we say a form of thanksgiving to God. Naomi, knowing what would normally take place/ carefully instructed Ruth how to go on. I gather there would be rejoicing, dancing etc., among those employed: I notice that it was the period of gathering in the barley harvest, being one of the ingredients used by the brewing industry today. Naturally, after a while of eating and drinking, some would want to rest. Boaz, the master was among those seeking rest. That which is next recorded would today be a source of scandal among some, but not so in this case, for we read Naomi had carefully instructed Ruth, and Ruth took notice, and heeded her mother-in-law’s advice. Ruth 3:5 & 7:-

“All that thou sayest unto me I will do...” “And when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn...” When he woke, what alarm! A woman was there at his feet. Ruth 3:9.

“And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” Verses 10 and 11, “...Blessed be thou of the Lord...” “Fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest:”

This was not just a request to redeem lands as was the permitted and dutiful custom of the day. The phrase “spread thy skirt over thine handmaid” had a far deeper meaning. There had to be an heir provided to succeed to the land. It involved marriage, as we see in chapter 4. Another kinsman was unable to redeem the land on behalf of Naomi and take to wife Ruth. Today, when a full Jewish marriage is performed, I understand the man throws off his Talith, or robe, over his wife and covers her head with it, which signified that from then on he took responsibility for all her needs.

Brother Harvey Linggood.

THE TWO SONS OF GOD

Or

ADAM AND JESUS, IN THEIR RELATION TO THE FALL AND REDEMPTION OF MAN.

PREFACE

The work here reproduced was originally published in a monthly magazine “The Lamp” and reprinted in 1876 in book form.

While giving the best extant outline of the plan of God from the Creation to the glorious consummation there appears on some pages to be an endorsement of the widespread error that natural corruptibility is the result of sin, but later chapters make it clear that the author was breaking through into the light and it is to him that we are largely indebted for the realisation that Law and legal relationship are the basis of the fall and redemption of man.

When he writes (page 17) “But the return to the ground is not, strictly speaking perhaps, any part of the penalty,” he has found the key to the understanding of the Atonement and subsequent study by both Edward Turney and others who followed has made apparent the inconsistency of orthodox views of the subject. It was therefore decided to reprint this work as originally written without emendations or footnotes and leave the careful reader to weigh the arguments.

Chapter One

ADAM

By the historic light of Divine truth we go back through the darkness of nearly sixty centuries to take our stand in Eden of the East. In this flight of thought the mind is crowded on every side. Countless millions of the dead flit quickly past/and all the sea and land seem one vast grave o’er which the living still tread their chequered way to the great unseen. The picture is rich with the dress of trees and flowers, but it is the drapery of a well-grown burial place.

Myriad queries press upon us. What are the things we see? What are these rocks and rivers, these forests, these fish, and birds, and beasts? Science gives each and all some dry name, and labels the elements of which they are composed. But what are those elements, whence came they; how did they assume their present shape? The latter may perhaps be answered, but the former never by children of the dust. Imagination divides and subdivides to infinity; and then a voice cries. All is spirit. Matter was spirit and may be spirit again; spirit is but another name for matter. And what is spirit? To this no answer is returned.

We have soon reached the limit of human enquiry and human discovery. We stand in dumb amazement before the boundless incomprehensible. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." What things are clearly seen and understood? "His eternal power and Godhead." The things seen testify of their Creator and Upholder. It is the revealed only that can profit us, the contemplation of all beyond is unprofitable and vain. The first man is the object of our present interest. There is only one 'book to which we can turn for information. From the dark void our world had been evolved and furnished for its new inhabitant. There was no man; none to survey its wealth and beauty, none to rule its birds and beasts, its fishes and its creeping things.

It seemed fit that he who was to have dominion should be of the earth itself. Under the creative power of the Eternal it was to be the well-spring, the womb of life. It was formed to bring forth: it was made to be inhabited. The agents of Eternal power who shaped and fashioned it were commanded to complete their great labour in the making of a new being in their own image, a little lower than themselves.

We are simply told of what was about to be done, but of the secret of the work nothing is recorded. How the dust of the earth was moulded into the new creature called man is useless to inquire. With the patriarch we can only say he was fearfully and wonderfully made. His visible and definable self is even now but imperfectly understood. When formed he was named Man. His composition was styled flesh, bone, blood, and breath. Though living and powerful he is but "a vapour." In death he ceases to be; he evaporates. He observes and thinks, but how he does not know. He differs from other living things in that he possesses an in-born sense of a Creator whom he must worship in some shape or conception. Like all other beings he dreads death. By nature he experiences no desire to leave his habitation; he clings to the earth, whence he sprang, as naturally as he clings to life.

When the Heavenly Powers had made man, the Highest pronounced him 'very good.' It was not said he was partly good and partly bad; the judgement upon him was complete and uniform. This goodness referred to his material self, for at that time he had no more moral character than a new-born babe.

EVE

The constitution of the man required an extension of divine power. The man was relatively imperfect. He was incomplete without the woman. The Almighty purposed to fill the earth with a population of His new-made offspring; and ordained that the work should be carried out upon a principle of mutual love. To effect this He created the woman from the man.

This production seems almost more marvellous than the formation of the man. But there are things in which we can make no comparisons; things of which we know absolutely nothing, except the terms by which their existence is conveyed to our minds. God has not thought proper to tell us more than that the man was cast into a deep sleep, his side opened, a rib severed from it, and of that rib woman was made. We may figure the man in his painless sleep; imagination sees the incision, the extraction, and the healing. From the rib the woman rises into view like magic apparitions upon the canvas, or the white sails of ships from out the haze that robes the sea, developed by the sunlight; but in reality we know nothing. Pencil and pen have traced the fancied figure, of the first lord of creation and his beauteous bride; and the universal mind dwells with pleasure on the innocence and happiness of the first pair.

Looking at the father and mother of all living, we consider them as one. Their nature is the same, and also their destiny.

THE TWO TREES

In some undiscovered spot, probably not far from Palestine, the Creator chose a garden, well watered, and planted with trees bearing fruit suitable for the sustenance of life. The genius of the prince of poets has revelled here in all the luxuries of poetic vision. But few parts, perhaps, of the panorama can be looked upon as faithful to the original.

The sacred historian bestows only a few simple words upon the scene: "A river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first Pison, that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river Gihon, the same is it which compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river Hiddekel; that is it which goeth towards the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates."

The only tree mentioned by name is the fig-tree, of whose leaves they made themselves aprons. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were in the midst of the garden. We are not told what these were; it is only the moral and physical purpose of their existence that is pointed out.

It appears probable that of the first of these two trees Adam and Eve ate regularly until their expulsion from the garden, and that this eating sustained life in a remarkable degree; that so long as they continued to eat health and vigour were maintained, and the natural tendency to decay, which is inherent in corruptible bodies, was retarded; but when they ceased to eat the course of their nature proceeded gradually and brought them again to dust.

No command is given against the eating of the tree of life, but of the fruit of the tree which stood in the midst of the garden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of that tree they were forbidden to eat on pain of death, not instant death, but, as is seen from what occurred, of expulsion, decay, and death, in the order of their nature.

TRANSGRESSION

The next proceeding in this primeval drama is more suitable for the assent of faith than the progress of investigation. A few bare facts, and those of the strangest class, are set down without any sign of surprise by the narrator, and no after writers on the sacred page have added a single touch to the picture which might relieve us of this unknown difficulty, unknown in all the range of historical knowledge.

The speaking of brute beasts, but more especially their participation in high moral things, and the eternal destiny of myriads of the human race, is a phenomenon on which there may be speculation, but about which it is hardly possible to reason.

The only positive mention of the temptation by the serpent, that we recollect, is that of Paul, in which he expresses his deep anxiety for the Corinthian believers. "But I fear," he says, "Lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Whether the apostle understood what Moses had recorded in a literal or in an allegorical sense he does not say.

It would not profit our readers to transcribe the conjectures of various writers who have sought to maintain the literal or the figurative view; their fancy might be amused, but this treatise has other ends to subserve.

Moses afterwards introduced a serpent to the camp of Israel, but that was a serpent of brass, a likeness of the fiery serpents of whose bites they were dying by thousands. This was not the serpent that bit them, but it had a resemblance to it. The serpent of brass was intended to heal, not to bite. It was therefore, not a biter, but a healer; not a poisoner, but a good physician. It was an antidote to the venom of the biter, and is understood to typify Him who was lifted up, to look upon whom in faith is to be healed of the death-wound inflicted in the garden of Eden.

Moses briefly and simply relates as a dialogue that which led to the death sentence on every child of Adam. The world wide and eternal mischief turns upon a deception of the understanding of the woman half willing to be beguiled. The serpent, or whatever may be signified by it, enticed Eve to taste the fruit. She was anxious to do so, and only restrained by divine prohibition. Persuasion and appetite at length overcame law; she plucked and ate. At her instigation her husband also partook of the fruit, and being head, though second in the transgression, he is said to have brought sin into the world.

These actions were the first explanations of sin. Till then sin was a word not understood; a word, in fact, not imported into our world. Sin is henceforth defined as “the transgression of the law.”

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KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

The eating of the forbidden tree produced an unexpected effect on the minds of Adam and Eve, The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. This knowledge must have existed before, but it was not attended with any sense of shame, a feeling observed in all races, however primitive their habits.

The change from innocence to modesty, which takes place gradually in every individual of the human family, came, in the case of Adam and Eve, as quickly as the act that produced it. It is a moral transition which we cannot explain. The record does not tell us that they had been previously informed of this result. It is inexplicable.

A sense of nakedness naturally induced a desire for secrecy and covering. The broad tough leaves of the fig tree was employed as a rude means of hiding their persons, but, like most devices for the concealment of crime, became the evidence of its commission. The two aprons were two public notices of trespass visible to all eyes except those whose guilt they were intended to cover. Those whose deeds are evil love darkness rather than light. The first sinners sought the shade and obscurity of the thick trees of the garden; they dreaded the light of heaven, and most of all the eyes of their former companions. Their own eyes were, probably, painful to each other. The eye and the voice of justice bring trembling to the evil doer.

The short questions of the divine messengers proved the crime of Adam and his wife, and their answers confirmed the truth of the proverb - he who excuses accuses himself.

THE SENTENCE.

Death had been pronounced and probably explained when the occupants of Eden were placed under law. The loss of consciousness and resolution into dust were not however to be the sudden or immediate consequences of sin. The effect of disobedience was designed to be endured. But in death both knowledge and feeling are totally destroyed. A long life of sorrow, partly relieved by divine interposition, was the real punishment for the breach of divine law.

The man and woman were intended to replenish the earth; but no child was born in the bright days of their innocence. That clause in the judgement, threatening to greatly multiply sorrow, intimates that procreation would not, have been altogether free from trouble: not only the pain, but also the conception was to be increased.

The wrath of God seems to have fallen with more severity on the woman than on the man. Adam, says Paul, was not deceived, but the woman was in the transgression. It would seem that Adam sinned from despair; rather than separately witness the judgement of God against his heart's love, he resolved to share her fate. But this heroism and devotion were not sufficient to expiate his crime. His fault was that he sinned under the full light of knowledge.

The terrors of the penalty reached him as the husband, father, and provider for his wife and family. The earth, whence he was taken, became his adversary. The rich and abundant produce which had started spontaneously from the soil was restrained and mingled with thorns and thistles. These obstacles are known in all climes where the subsistence of man depends on the cultivation of the ground, they are overcome only by daily hard toil, and the bread is won by the sweat of the brow. Man does not know why the weeds spring; but their presence reminds him of the first capital offence.

An easy tending of the garden amused the leisure and refined the taste of the first human pair; but the desire to attain by unlawful means to a higher and happier state threw them into a life-long conflict with the obstacles they had provoked.

The judgement against the serpent is brief, and not easy of explanation. The impression received by Adam and Eve from the sentence against themselves is not hard to be understood. They knew that they had been formed from the dust, and to be told that they should return to dust could leave no room for the idea of intermediate existence. Once they were not; again they were not to be. Post-mortem life, recognised throughout Europe and the world, in shrines, burning lamps, and prayers for the dead, who are pretended to be really alive, must have been absolutely unknown to the first individuals of our race. Their literal extinction was as certain as their literal existence. But the return to the ground is not, strictly speaking perhaps, any part of the penalty. The law of all corruptible bodies brings them sooner or later to their original elements: they all terminate in dust.

CHERUBIM AND FLAMING SWORD.

Part of the sentence was expulsion from the garden. We are again confronted with phenomena beyond our knowledge. The scene is altogether strange. We figure to our minds a stationary display of fire, ready to flame out to the destruction of those who would attempt to regain the lost Paradise. The tree of life was always guarded by this flaming sword. The preservation of the tree looks like a sharpening of the pains of disobedience. There was the standing inducement to return, and the constant threatening flame against all intrusion.

The sacred historian has not said when these things ceased to be. Again we know nothing, and all inquiry and imagination are useless. It is some slight consolation to suppose that these mysteries of which it would not be well for us to be cognisant. As little is really known of the cherubim who accompanied the flaming sword, as of the sword itself. They appear to be beings of human form, of superior power and intelligence, frequently engaged in the affairs of our world; but no farther can we go. This display of defence around the Edenic Paradise may be classed with the wonders of the burning bush, the smoking fiery summit of Sinai, and many others.

COATS OF SKINS

The inspired penmen do not always chronicle events in the exact order of their occurrence. Moses speaks of the coats of skins before the expulsion from the Garden; but the summary dismissal from the tree of life favours the idea that God provided this covering after He had driven the sinners out. The order of these facts is perhaps not of much importance to us; the significance of the arrangements is of greater interest.

This provision of skins for the partial habiliment of Adam and Eve was a direct rejection of their own attempt. They would discern in it that their own scheme was displeasing to God and totally unfit for the object in view. That object was not merely the hiding of parts of their bodies, else fig leaves or any other garment might have answered the purpose. Neither fig leaves, nor skins, nor the shades of the darkest night could conceal the shame of sin. No plan but that designed by Him against whom they had trespassed could bring one spark of relief and consolation to their guilty minds.

The skin robes are not to be considered as articles of dress, but as types of God's means for the covering of moral nakedness. In this light we see the impossibility of acceptance with God in an unclothed condition; and all are unclothed, whatever may be their investiture, unless clothed with the garments provided by the Almighty for their covering.

Besides these considerations the coats of skins imply the death of the animals to which they belonged. This is the first instance of the shedding of blood in connection with the recognition and forgiveness of sins; for, after the conditions of Heaven had been obeyed, a sense of satisfaction would ensue. From the subsequent teaching on sacrifices it may be safely concluded that the animals whose skins furnished the coats of Adam and Eve were lambs or kids; types of the divine Lamb appointed for the purifying and covering of all who would find favour in the sight of God.

The coats of skins were not worn over the aprons of fig leaves. These were first put off; and the preliminary act would signify the putting away of sin. This implies repentance and sorrow for their crime. The putting on of the coats made by God signified their re-instatement in divine favour; it indicated their provisional righteousness, and gave hope that the tree of life might yet become accessible. The cherubic flames reminded them that no transgressor unforgiven could taste its fruit, such having no right to enter the paradise of God.

If the first sin had been unpardonable, no covering would have been appointed; no atonement made. The sentence, "Ye shall surely die," gives inference that continued obedience would have been rewarded by translation, and avoidance of the dark valley of the shadow of death. But certain death is not necessarily eternal death. No way of escape was made for Koran and his company; the cities of the plain also suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Adam was on probation: in two conditions: the first trial began in innocence; the second under repentance and pardon.

BLOOD.

The shedding of blood and the pardon of sin are made fast in one indissoluble bond, essential in their relationship. This inevitable connection was before the apostle, when he reminded the Hebrew saints that almost all things under Moses' law were purged with blood, and that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. To spill blood in sacrifice is to give life, for the life of all flesh is in the blood thereof. To purge with blood is to blot out the stain of sin; that is, to obliterate in death. Its application washes out the spots of transgression and confers the right to new life. Hence, when this has been accomplished, the washed and sanctified person is exhorted to keep himself unspotted from the world.

The loss of life is a literal fact; the giving of life as a ransom by the shedding of blood is a literal fact also; but the application of that blood to the mind and heart of man born in sin is an act of faith; therefore the just shall live by faith.

Every offering to be efficacious must be clean. To bring an unclean offering was an abomination in the sight of God. There were two classes of animals, the clean and the unclean; of the latter mankind in every age have been forbidden by the Almighty to bring sacrifices to Him. If the typical offerings were so jealously guarded, how much more the anti-type; and to every mind it must occur that the clean makes clean, but the unclean defiles.

Nothing is unclean of itself. But the distinction made by Jehovah points to the fact that no offering which is legally unclean can cleanse a subject who is legally defiled. All those beasts and birds legally appointed by Jehovah for sacrifice were specially described, and to bring any other was to add sin to sin. But the physical nature of the unclean animals was quite as good as the physical nature of the clean animals: they were all very good.

It was not physical but legal defilement for which man needed to atone; it was not for any violation of his material self that he sought pardon; but it was for a breach of Jehovah's law. The breach of law did not make man constitutionally worse, nor does the observance of law make him constitutionally better. His relationship to the future purpose of his Maker is changed; but he himself as a created being remains the same.

It was not to remedy any inherent or contracted defect of nature that the scheme of atonement was designed; it was to provide for an entirely new nature; a putting off and a putting on. The Almighty is not

like man; He does not require to improve His work: all He makes is perfect of its kind; but there are various kinds, and the higher we ascend in the scale of creation the more exalted is the work which meets our view.

In relation to this globe man was the last work of the Creator and the noblest. From invisible spirit, condensed by Omnipotence through untold ages, to rude rocks and mighty depths, from tiny herbs to towering forests; from the first shades and forms of life through all the terrors and grandeurs of myriad grades, we mark the measured pace, the increasing beauty, and the boundless wisdom of His works whose ways are past finding out.

CAIN AND ABEL.

The first child born represented the disobedience and ingratitude of his parents. As a tiller of the ground Cain's profession was a daily memorial of the anger of the Lord. Cain was the first murderer; the type of the majority of mankind, a hater of his brother. Abel is a specimen of the God-fearing few who, like himself, have been ever since, the envy and prey of the other class. Christ seems to allude to Cain when he rebuked the Jews as being of their father the devil, a murderer from the beginning.

Cain was not willing to recognise his sinful state inherited by birth, nor offer blood as an evidence of hereditary and personal guilt. Like all envious and selfish men, he reserved the choicest things for himself, and presented to God as little as he could of that which cost him least. The collateral obedience and goodness of his brother increased his wicked disposition, and at length he conceived a plan for getting rid of his hateful presence and example. The first murder struck two discordant strings which will vibrate through all time: sympathy for Abel and abhorrence for Cain.

The fruit of the ground was good to bring before the Lord; but it was not enough. It could not speak of sin and death; it pointed to no life as a price for redemption. Abel brought more than this. He spared not the choicest of his flocks and herds, and was rewarded with the answer of a good conscience towards God. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering." Man had offended God, but God had not left man without a way of reconciliation. He had blessed him with those things suitable to find acceptance in His presence: all the goodness and the mercy were His.

Cain refused to take one of those animals that lay at the door of his fold. No blood of sacrifice spoke to God in favour of Cain; but the blood of Abel cried unto the Lord. This is mentioned in two places - Genesis 4:10 and Hebrews 12:24. The latter passage draws a comparison between the blood of Abel and the blood of Jesus, "And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

There can be no comparison between things totally different. For one thing to be said to be better than another, it is necessary for the two things to be of the same kind, and to be intended for the same use. The blood which flowed from Abel's veins when Cain slew him was not sacrificial blood. It did not speak good things but bad. Comparison lies between good and better, not between bad and better; the inference is then that Paul referred to the blood of Abel's offering. This brought down the respect of the Lord; but could not finally remove transgression. The better things belonged to the blood of God's Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world.

NOAH'S SACRIFICE.

Two thousand years had produced a population of rebels against the government of Heaven. The earth was filled with violence; all flesh had corrupted His way. The Almighty resolved to destroy man and beast, and to begin afresh the work of peopling the world. Divine forbearance has its limits, and that limit was passed by the scoffers of Noah while, for one hundred and twenty years, he preached righteousness and prepared the ark for the safety of himself and family.

At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters abated, and the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. The first work of Noah, after emerging from the ark, was to build an altar unto the Lord, and to take of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offer burnt offerings on the altar. This event added a new link to the chain which bound man to

acknowledge his proper standing in the eyes of his Maker. The clean sacrifices again pointed onward with the finger of hope to that Divine Offering without blemish and without spot. The Almighty expressed His pleasure at this act: we read that “The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. And God blessed Noah, and his sons, and said unto them. Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.”

After this declaration, which placed Noah in a position similar to that of Adam, Jehovah repeated His injunctions with regard to blood. He then chose the rainbow as a token of peace between Himself and the creatures of His hand.

THE OFFERING OF ISAAC.

At the advanced age of seventy-five, Abraham departed out of Haran and came into the land of Canaan. He is one of those Bible characters who has left a more distinct impression on the world’s heart than all the heroes of profane history. The sacred record is remarkable for this, its figures never fade.

A small group of Old and New Testament celebrities, with the peerless Nazarene for the central star, has been, and will ever be vividly before mankind. The best stories, the most thrilling facts outside the Bible, have but lightly struck the chords of human joy and pity; but the tones are deep and ceaseless that echo from the lyre touched by the sacred hand. The sale of Joseph, the meeting with his brethren; the fiery furnace; the prophet thrown to the lions, are written for all time. The offering up of Isaac holds a high place in these unfading memories.

During the long period of Abraham’s sojourn in Canaan and in the Philistine’s land, his faith had been severely tried. He was now sinking under the weight of years; Isaac, the child of his old age, the special gift of God, born to him out of due time, sweetened his declining days, and promised to continue the honour of his house. Abraham might now have walked gently down the hill and rested in dreamless sleep in the still dark valley of death to await the promised seed whose voice should break the silence of the ancient graves.

But the Almighty had a new and crowning trial in store to test the faith of His friend. He commanded him to slay and burn his only son! “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.”

The narrator records no hint of question or hesitation. Abraham had once presumed to ask the Almighty for some sign by which he might know that He would fulfil His word. The sign was given: a burning lamp passed between the pieces of his sacrifice, and in a deep sleep the fortunes of his unborn sons passed before him in vision. His trust in the Almighty was implicit and unwavering.

“He rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife.” Who could describe the old man’s feelings through the previous and two following nights! He suppressed his anguish, the beloved lad went in cheerful innocence like a lamb to the slaughter. “They went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father: and he said. Here am I, my son. And he said: Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said:

“My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together.”

Abraham is the only instance of a resemblance to the Father of Jesus Christ, each offering up his only son whom he loved.

“And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.” The implicit obedience of Isaac was equal to the firm faith of his father, and cast a well-defined shadow of the meekness and obedience

of the true lamb. “And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.” There can be no doubt he would have struck the blow had not the angel of the Lord called to him to stay his hand, and to do the lad no harm. “Now I know,” said the angel, “that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.”

That moment a heavy load fell from Abraham’s heart, and at the same instant he realised the pleasant reward of unbounded trust in God.

It is usual to regard Isaac as a type of Christ; but in the apostle’s notice of this circumstance in Hebrews he neither affirms nor denies it. His comment shows that the offering was a means employed by the Almighty to prove the faith of Abraham; and this agrees with a portion of the passage already quoted from Genesis. We do not think Isaac typical of Christ as an offering. Isaac, though bound and laid on the altar, was not offered in reality; he was only offered in the obedient purpose of his father’s heart. This thought is suggested by the fact that there is not a single example of an offering being ordained by Jehovah of any individual already under sentence of death as Isaac was, being a son of Adam; and also by the fact that he was not really slain. Isaac may have foreshadowed the intention of God to make a human being the means of atonement; but, if so, this was done without slaying him as a typical sacrifice.

It is an easy matter to find, or rather to make, allegories and correspondences; but the safest plan is to keep close to those already made by the New Testament writers. Departure from this rule has produced a well-known volume largely filled with human fancies. While perhaps few of our readers would assent to any of these correspondences, it is not out of place to intimate the need of caution lest from another point of view we also fall into the same extreme.

The firmness of the patriarch was founded in the belief that God was able to raise up Isaac, even from the dead; “from whence also,” Paul adds, “he received him in a figure.” It is true that to Abraham’s mind his son was as good as dead; but it has been suggested by some writers that Paul’s allusion was not to this but that it was to the extraordinary conditions of Isaac’s birth, (Romans 4:19).

To be continued...