

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 126

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## Editorial

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

So many Bible prophecies are approaching their culmination; Zephaniah is one:

“Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them my indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.” (Zephaniah 3:8).

We see the world leaders fearful of what is coming, mixed with unfounded optimism that the worst won't happen, but to us Jesus says “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” for the elect to be called to Him. “Watch ye therefore, and pray 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.”

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Thank you for all your letters. Here are a few extracts:

### **Sister Linggood writes,**

“Now concerning your remarks on page two of the last Circular Letter, the third paragraph down, I think your reasoning here is faulty with reference to Daniel 12:2 that those awaking are not sleeping in death (as only the righteous are said to sleep in death) but this is not so seeing that many kings of Israel and Judah, bad as well as good (e.g. Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin) were said to have slept with their fathers in death, so I think it is more correct to say the responsible are said to sleep in death.”

I thank Sister Linggood for correcting me on this point. How often I must have read that the kings of Israel and Judah slept with their fathers in the records of the Kings and Chronicles yet overlooked this fact when writing in the last Circular Letter.

### **Sister Linggood continues:**

“Sleeping “in the dust” surely denotes physical death both the just and unjust will awake from this death even as Daniel 12:2 states; I also believe that the dead spoken of in Revelation 20:5 are physically dead as also in verses 12 and 13.”

Brother Phil Parry also writes in similar vein. “This would appear to be Bible teaching and is in harmony with Paul's defence before Festus - Acts 24:15, “And have hope toward God... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”

**Upon Revelation 19 Brother Phil Parry writes:**

“Some of the other matters of Revelation 19 I prefer to keep an open mind on, though I can accept that all the taking of life through the just reign of Jesus could be done through his angels and at his command for he has justified his part as a Saviour in the giving of his own life for all – so those who reject him are without excuse seeing their natural existence is through him.”

Do please keep on writing. Comments from everyone will be most welcome. With Sincere Love to all, in the Master’s service,

Brother Russell Gregory.

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## **The Mysteries of The Kingdom of Heaven**

### **Matthew Chapter 13.**

A careful study of these parables in the light of the other scriptures and called by Jesus “Mysteries” (or secrets) will reveal that the literal Davidic Kingdom to be restored to Israel when Christ returns to the earth is not here being described seeing that event was the subject of many Old Testament prophecies and a constant hope and expectation of the Jews since the Babylonian captivity, but the nation as a whole were looking for a king who would free them from their literal servitude of Rome, being spiritually blind to the prophecies regarding His first advent.

The Old Testament prophets had seen in one blended vision His rejection by His nation and His crucifixion, also His glory as David’s son, but had afforded no information regarding the time between these two events when God, by faith in Jesus, would be “raising up children unto Abraham.”

It had been prophesied of Jesus that He would “open His mouth in parables and utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 13:35. Compare Psalm 78:2).

It may be seen in these seven parables that Jesus foretells the formation and history of the Church from the “sowing of the seed” to the “harvest.” He speak of His Church as “The Kingdom of Heaven” in Matthew 16:18,19 and entrusts the “keys” of it to the Apostle Peter and he it was who eventually ‘opened the door of Christian Faith to the Jews first, at Pentecost and to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius. (Acts 10:34-48).

The parable of “The Sower” is foundational to the understanding of the others, as indicated by Christ (Mark 4:13) and that together with the parable of the Wheat and Tares were interpreted by Himself, taken together they describe the various aspects of the Church true and false through this age.

The parable of the Mustard Seed describes its rapid growth from a small beginning - the least of all seeds - to a great place in the earth - Christendom. The leaven, a scriptural symbol of corruption or defilement, was hidden in “The Three Measures of Meal” - the original Apostolic Church - by a “Woman,” probably an allusion to the “Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth,” until the whole was leavened - an apt description of the decline gradually brought about by false teachers as prophesied by the Apostles and which, in their days, were already tolerated.

The “Net” - of the Gospel - which gathered of every kind, good and bad, and in this mingled state they remain in the net in the sea - of mankind - like the Wheat and Tares growing together until the Harvest, when only the angles will be entrusted to separate them. Matthew 13:36-43. “God knows them

that are His” and Jesus describes the true Children of the Kingdom, those understanding the truth of salvation through His sacrificial death and have kept the beginning of their faith firm to the end, as the “Good Ground,” “The Wheat,” “The Good Fish,” “The Treasure” and “The Pearl,” Himself being the “Merchantman” seeking goodly pearls.

Jesus came seeking and to save that which was lost and “having found one Pearl of great price He goes and sells all that He had and buys it.” “We are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ.” The Pearl is an apt description of the One Body of Christ formed over a period of time hidden inside the oyster being perfected to finally come forth in Glory.

Likewise the true kingdom is like treasure hidden in a field (or world). Matthew 13:38, which when a man (Jesus had found. He hideth it - “our life is hid with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:3, “and for joy thereof” – Hebrews 12:2, He goes and sells all that He has - His life - to buy that field - Adam and his seed - for the sake of the treasure, for God is the Saviour of all men (in that He redeemed Adam) but especially of them that believe,” for they have life eternal – (see 1 Timothy 4:10).

Here the Church is depicted as the “Kingdom” in the sense of their being heirs of the future Kingdom of God being by faith “translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son.” (Colossians 1:13). The Church was a mystery hidden from past ages which was destined to be revealed to His Holy Apostles and prophets. (Ephesians 3:5-9; Colossians 1:24-27). It was founded upon their preaching, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:20).

Regarding the parable of the Leaven, see also other places where Scripture predicted apostasy:

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29-30).

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: From such turn away... But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:1-8, 13).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their hearts from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the truth shall be evil spoken of.” (2 Peter 2:2).

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude verse 4.

Also see Revelation 17 and 18, etc.

Sister Evelyn Linggood.

# **A Reply to an Article appearing in “The Christadelphian Magazine” for May 1990 entitled “The Saving Work of Christ”**

**Part of a series under the heading of “Studies in the Statement of Faith.”  
(Article written by Michael Ashton, Editor of “The Christadelphian Magazine.”)**

Not only do the Nazarenes appreciate this important and crucial subject but came to the conclusion years ago that Christadelphians, chiefly Mr Roberts, did not fully understand why Christ died, or he and subsequent writers and members of his community would not have subscribed to a document known as the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith which many sincere people have come to realise is a blasphemous degradation of the Son of God and of God Himself in many respects.

Robert Roberts was the chief pioneer of the Christadelphian community and made this document, (separated into thirty clauses) as a basis of belief and binding upon all members. It was not their Bible but his interpretation of it. Seeing that the copy received concerning studies of the B.A.S.F. only commences at Clause 12, I find it necessary to revert to some of the earlier Clauses.

At the beginning you state the scriptures of Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them except, - and it is here where your clause 1 reserves the right to add, alter or take away anything that does not harmonise with what is your own teaching and basis of faith, and blame the translators for being biased.

The translators were very sincere men and had nothing to gain, as did R. Roberts have to lose in his self-esteem, when the true meaning of the Sacrifice of Christ was presented to many of his members.

I have no disagreement with Clauses 2,3, or 4. This particular Clause 4 which describes Adam’s creation from dust, a living soul or natural body of life ‘very good’ in kind and condition. God placing him under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience, I take to mean that if Adam disobeyed, then this natural life would no longer continue, it would be taken from him. But no. Clause 5 states, “Adam broke the law for continuance of his natural life and was adjudged (not unworthy of natural continuance of life but) unworthy of immortality.” Was Adam immortal? Does the record or Clause 4 state anything about immortality? Does it not say a natural body of life - a living soul - its continuance contingent on obedience? Why substitute the statement “natural life” for “immortality”? Why say that Adam was sentenced to return to the ground but that this not only required a change of nature but a defilement of it in some way that only God could perform, and also transmit to Adam’s posterity, when in fact, Adam needed no miracle or change to cause his return to the ground from whence he was taken?

If God performed this transmission of change and defilement upon Adam’s posterity how could He justly condemn sinners? Some of the references to scripture in this Clause 5 are irrelevant to the subject and out of context; they are merely cited to make it appear as the teaching of the Spirit. When the contents of Clause 5 (not then adopted) were suggested to both Dr Thomas and R. Roberts it was rejected as unacceptable having no scriptural evidence, yet this very same doctrine was a tenet of the Roman and Apostate Churches at that time. Much has been written, and I could write much, and talk much to any Christadelphian who feels qualified to discuss the B.A.S.F. and some of them would be surprised, if not appalled, by the revelation of what they are expected to believe.

Examine one of the references in Clause 5 - 2 Corinthians 1:9 cited as a proof of the sentence of death on Adam and posterity. It is not relevant to Paul’s position at the time he used those words. Paul had been made free from the law of sin and death, so how could what you affirm to be the law of sin and death, be in him and his fellow members of whom also he spoke? You say later in your article that God

abrogated this law of sin and death in the case of Jesus only. Paul teaches differently. But your Clause 6 states that “God conceived a plan of restoration and ultimate rescue of the race from destruction, without setting aside His justice and necessary law of sin and death, etc.” The scripture teaches that Jesus was never under the “Law of sin and death” but that he was capable of natural decay and death by virtue of his nature being the same as the First Adam, a living soul. If, as you teach, his nature was worthy of death how could a penalty due be set aside by suffering its penalty? After all, you must accept that every righteous act of Jesus depended on His physical nature, which you are endeavouring to discredit in every way possible out of context, where you quote only the mind and works of the flesh. Matthew 15:19,20. Did any of these things come out of Jesus? If not, they were not in His flesh or in His mind, yet your Clause 5 states, “A sentence which defiled and this defilement became a physical law of his being and was transmitted to all Adam’s posterity.” Why did you not quote the words of Jesus in Luke 6:43-49? Simply because it would destroy your case. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil...”

I think I have shown the main root of the Christadelphian trouble, as far as doctrine is concerned, to be Clause 5 principally; and many of those that follow are contradictory manipulations of men who, in a desire to portray Jesus as a man of flesh and blood, have reduced Him who was provided by God as the anti-type of the legally clean and unblemished animal types under the law, as a degraded and inferior polluted condemned body of flesh exposed naked on a tree before a jeering and leering mob of Jewish and Gentile rabble as a demonstration of what was justly due to mortal flesh. Yet one of your recently late members saw it fit to write in the book entitled “Redemption in Christ Jesus” that there was no injustice in Christ’s death. A few years ago, in the 1980’s, he was asked in a letter if he had changed his mind about this and other matters relating to it, but no reply was received, and since then both men concerned have passed off the scene.

The clauses are all meant to impress on the reader the condemned nature of Jesus but in trying to achieve this a dual Christ is the imminent result. I have not the time or space to go into all the Clauses but will point out some of the contradictory and false teaching as expressed in the article. I would advise first a reading of Exodus 12:1-10, and Exodus 13:11-13, also Leviticus 16:5-24, I would emphasise that Jesus was not the anti-type of Aaron, for on earth He should not be a Priest, seeing there were priests that offered gifts according to the law: serving unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle as shown to him in the mount by pattern, Jesus being the substance (heavenly) of that pattern when He passed through the veil into Heaven itself. Hebrews 8:1-6. Jesus was not a priest when He offered Himself as a willing sacrifice for us. He was the victim, not the priest, and He only died once, so your contention of Hebrews 7:27 needing two deaths by blood shedding, falls to the ground.

I understand one or two of your female members at Gloucester have contended with F. G. Hampton in support of this general Christadelphian view, and this is the main reason why that body cannot explain the Sacrifice of Christ in the scriptural way people would be willing to accept, without having to impugn the Justice and Love of God.

Clauses 9,10, and 11 implies that Jesus was, by His begettal, a dual person, a sinless man inside a body of condemned nature directing the body in its actions but not responsible for its production by God through Mary, yet as a separate entity, the sinless part of Him could ‘be released by death and rise again after the condemned part of Him had suffered the death required by the Righteousness of God. This death, you must admit, involved blood-shedding, yet you believe the death required and passed on Adam and his posterity was natural decay followed by death and a return to corruption and dust! And in Clause 10 it is stated of Jesus that this is the death Jesus suffered as a result of Adam’s transgression and of partaking of the nature of all men. If this is so, why did not Jesus see corruption and return to dust? Why did this “flesh-body” remain if it was condemned? Was his blood drained as being faulty? If so, why was it described as being precious? Has God purchased us with faulty, condemned blood and a condemned man who, we of the Nazarene Faith believe had no choice in that nature? Surely every physical aspect and every spiritual aspect, which was moral and righteous and holy, describes Jesus as the man, not partly divine and partly human which was stated recently by a writer in the “Glad Tidings” magazine.

Clause 11 states that the message of Jesus He delivered from God to His kinsmen, the Jews, was a call to repentance from every evil work, the assertion of His divine Sonship; and the proclamation of the glad tidings that God would restore their kingdom through Him, and accomplish all things written of Him in the prophets. The fact is that the Statement of Faith asserts only part of His Sonship as divine, the other part is Adam's. And why a call to the Jews to repent of every evil work if, according to your teaching, this is not possible in a normal human being? Why say that Jesus could not have been fully obedient if He had not been the Son of God? Was Jesus justified in calling Jews to repent from every evil way if He knew that they were incapable of it? Why do you continually give people the impression that the ability to sin is a fixation of evil in the flesh, whereas sin can only be an act of transgression of Law? Where there is no Law there is no transgression. Adam could not have sinned therefore in Eden until Law entered. Keep Divine Law always in mind and you have the key to understanding.

Concerning Clause 12; to a person who is aware of the attributes of God as being just and righteous, plenteous in mercy. Truth, and, above all, Love, this clause teaches the opposite, and borders on blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and a declaration of the unrighteousness of God. It teaches that in the overshadowing of Mary by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Thing produced as a result, was by nature, more inferior to the animal types of which He was the anti-type (in regard to His death by blood-shedding) and not in character. He did not sacrifice His character; this was a preserved necessity for his heavenly Priesthood, but not so the life in the blood - this was shed for all. You deny this by saying that the death Jesus voluntarily suffered was not a sacrifice, but a demonstration by Himself and His Father of what was just and fit for a condemned, sinfully inclined nature begotten by the power of the Spirit of God, and the Jews and Romans were instruments in the hands of God for the committing of this cruel torture and death of a Son who had no choice in the nature He possessed, unless, of course, you believe Jesus was pre-existent with His Father and that Hebrews 2:11-17 supports this view. By this means God could neither condemn the flesh of Jesus, nor His sinless character, and be just, or the justifier of him that believeth such a doctrine.

Previous to his disobedience, Adam was a related Son of God by creation, as a living soul, or natural body of life, "very good," but his sin brought a sentence of death upon him but not a change of nature. To remove such a sentence a means of redemption needed to be found. God foresaw this from the beginning and foreordained His begotten Son of a virgin, who would voluntarily pay Adam's debt of life by giving of his own, and by this ransom restore to Adam a continuance of probation in relationship to God as an adopted son, but not only to Adam but all who were federally constituted under his sin but not actual sinners. (Romans 5). This "legal and federal position" teaching of Paul, you refuse to accept, because your Statement of Faith clauses are the result of an indoctrinated obsession that sin is in the physical flesh. Even Dr Thomas misread and misunderstood the sense of Paul's words, and concluded that sin had to be an element of some kind in the physical flesh, and in order for it to be condemned, it had to be destroyed. The following is a quotation from Elpis Israel, page 128, "Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there. His body was as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died." Dr Thomas also said, "Sin, whose wages is death, had to be condemned in the nature that had transgressed." You can see from the first quotation how Dr Thomas makes 'sin' a physical thing. The correct understanding of Paul's statement is, that Jesus, in the identical nature in which Adam was created, proved obedience to be possible by not submitting to temptation which could have caused Him to sin. Thus by being of this very flesh, yet sinless, Jesus justified His Father in condemning Adam's sin. Robert Roberts once wrote, "If there had been a Jew who had kept the law in all things, it would have been in his power, by dying, to cleanse himself from Adamic condemnation." With all his professed reading of scripture, either R. Roberts had never read Romans 6:14 and some of Paul's other statements, or he paid no heed to their message, i.e., that those who were under the Law were under the dominion of sin until redeemed, and this could only be effective by recognition of Christ in the offerings which were types of Himself. In Romans 7:9 Paul says, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Yet Paul later said that as touching the righteousness which was in the law he was blameless. "If there had been a Jew who had kept the law in all things." What of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, or what of John himself? Is there any evidence in scripture that he did not respect the law in all things? If all that was required was a keeping of the law in all things, and death to cleanse from

Adamic condemnation, then would not this have sufficed in the beheading of John, and saved God the bringing forth of Jesus to perform the equivalent?

All through your comments on the various clauses there is this theme of body separation from character, and absurd contradictions. For example, you say, "By His obedient sacrifice Jesus overcame the power of sin in Himself and showed He was deserving of immortality." This is more of your subtle teaching of sin-in-the-flesh in Himself, and of dying-for-Himself. Jesus need not have died, because there was no power of sin over, or in Him, other than a corruptible nature which did not come by sin but by the Creator. Your "changed flesh" doctrine is a myth which neither Dr Thomas nor R. Roberts believed in 1869. The whole of your comments on these studies amount to the same old doctrines of defiled nature under the synonym of Sin, but wrapped in language which makes it appear more acceptable to the reader. Alfred Norris's theory, that the death of Jesus was necessary for the betterment of His body, that a change to incorruptible nature was not sufficient to arrest the temptation to sin, which might have happened if His life had not been cut short by crucifixion, according to Norris.

In another place you quote Hebrews 2:14 out of context by saying "Jesus by dying destroyed the Devil "in Himself." You describe this Devil as sin in the flesh, and misquote Ephesians 2:15 - "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity having by the cross slain the enmity thereby..." Also that, "He abolished death in Himself," whereas the statement of Paul is that Jesus, by His own sacrificial death, abolished the death which came by sin, for those who believed in Him and were baptised into His death; He did not abolish natural death, and this is why you have to add to Paul's words "in Himself," to suit your false view of the death which came by sin. (See 2 Timothy 1:10).

One other important observation I have to make is the reference to 2 Corinthians 5:21 at Clause 3, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin..." The intention of the compiler of the clause was to make this read as though Jesus had been made sin at His birth of Mary by being born of her supposedly "unclean nature" which was believed by the compiler to be synonymous of sin. The question arises. If we ourselves are already sin, where is the need to make Jesus sin for us? How can we derive any benefit from that? We must learn from scripture what the apostle means, and we find that under the law, the sins of the people were placed upon the head of the animal to be slain by the Priest, thus the animal, by the transfer of their sins to it, was made sin for them, but this made no difference to the animal's flesh which was legally clean beforehand, showing that sin in the physical flesh is impossible. Jesus was therefore made sin in this way at the age of 33h years, when God laid upon Him the sin of the world that it might be taken away, and that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. If Jesus was made sin at birth, or as you express it, "mortal human nature," then you have to accept that previous to this He knew no sin, and must therefore have been pre-existent. Thus you support the views of the Trinitarian element whom you profess to oppose.

I am not by disposition a man of anger or heated temperament as the outspoken comments might make me appear, but it is the gratitude I feel for God and His Son in what they have done for me, that brings out the same feelings of Christ when He cast out the corrupters of the Temple, that in the reading of the Clauses of your Statement of Faith, has the same effect on me, "Make not the Son of God an unclean unholy thing."

If we are standing on Holy ground, as you express it, then in the words of Him who was and is Holy, "Take these things hence."

Hold fast the inspired Word of God and sound doctrine, and we need not be ashamed at His coming.

I remain a sincere labourer in The Saving Work of Christ. P. Parry, also Fellow Labourers.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14:2-3.

This discourse of Jesus begins at verse 13 of the previous chapter: “Therefore when he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him... Yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say unto you.”

Jesus was, of course, referring to His crucifixion, for it was by offering Himself as the Passover Lamb for the sin of the world that he prepared a place for His disciples. They could not follow Him in this. Jesus continued, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” This He did at His resurrection, and was seen of them during the forty days up to His ascension into heaven.

But Jesus was saying more: He was telling them of their abiding in Him, and He in them, and they in the Father during their natural life. Verse 23, “If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode in him.”

Young’s Concordance shows the Greek word “*monē*” to occur twice in scripture. The first time is in verse 2 quoted above and translated “mansions,” the second is in verse 23 and translated “abode.” I believe the underlying meaning of the word is making a permanent home, a place to dwell for ever; and in our Heavenly Father’s household are an abundance of such dwelling places.

The importance of dwelling in the father’s house was first seen in figure at the first Passover in Egypt. (Exodus 12:22), where everyone was required to stay in the house until morning in order to be safe and have life.

During this present night of worldly darkness we are safe in the household of Jesus Christ. Where Jesus is, we are also.

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## The Two Sons of God

### Chapter Eight

#### Adoption Considered

“Adoption is an action whereby a man takes a person into his family, in order to make him part of it, acknowledges him for his son, and receives him into the number, and gives him a right to the privileges of his children,” - Cruden. The most remarkable instance in Scripture is the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh’s daughter. We have no information at hand concerning the Egyptian law, but probably it did not vary much from the after enactments of the Romans in this respect.

By the old Roman law, the relation of father and son differed little from that of master and slave. Hence, if a person wished to adopt the son of another, the natural father transferred (mancipated) the boy to him by a formal sale before a competent magistrate, such as the praetor at Rome, and in the provinces before the governor. The father thus conveyed all his paternal rights, and the child from that moment became in all legal respects the child of the adoptive father. If the person to be adopted was his own master (*sui juris*), the mode of



proceeding was by a legislative act of the people in the *comitia curiatae*. This was called *adrogatio*, from *rogare*, to propose a law. In the case of *adrogatio*, it was required that the adoptive father should have no children, and that he should have no reasonable hopes of any. In either case the adopted child became subject to the authority of his new father; passed into his family, name, and sacred rites; and was capable of succeeding to his property.

Women could not adopt a child, for by adoption the adopted person came into the power, as it was expressed, of the adopter; and as a woman had not the parental power over her own children, she could not obtain it over those of another by any form of proceeding. Under the emperors it became the practice to effect *adrogatio* by an imperial rescript. But this practice was not introduced till after the time of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161).

There was also adoption by testament. C. Julius Caesar thus adopted his great nephew Octavius, until he received the appellation of Augustus, by which he is generally known. But this adoption by testament was not a proper adoption, and Augustus had his testamentary adoption confirmed by a *lex curiata*.

The legislation of Justinian (Inst.i.11) altered the old law of adoption in several respects. It declares that there are two kinds of adoption; one called *adrogatio*, when a rescript of the emperor (*principali rescripto*) - a person adopts another who is free from parental control; the other, when by the authority of the magistrate (*imperio magistratus*), he who is under the control of his parents is made over by that parent to another person, and adopted by him either as his son, his grandson, or a relation, in any inferior degree. Females also, might be adopted in the same manner. But when a man gave his child to be adopted by a stranger, none of the parental authority passed from the natural to the adoptive father; the only effect was, that the child succeeded to the inheritance of the latter if he died intestate. It was only when the adopter was the child's paternal or maternal grandfather, or otherwise so related to him as that the natural law (*naturalia jura*) concurred with that of adoption, that the new connexion became in all respects the same with the original one. It was also declared that the adopter should be at least eighteen years older than the person whom he adopted. Women who had lost their own children by death, might, by the indulgence of the emperor, receive those of others in their place.

Adoption was no part of the old German law: it was introduced into Germany with the Roman law, in the latter part of the middle ages. The general rules concerning adoption in Germany are the same, but there are some variations established by the law of the several states.

The French law of adoption is contained in eighth title of the first book of the "Code Civil." The following are its principal provisions: Adoption is only permitted to persons above the age of fifty, who have neither children nor other legitimate descendants, and are at least fifteen years older than the individual adopted. It can only be exercised in favour of one who has been an object of the adopter's constant care, for at least six years during minority, or of one who has saved the life of the adopter in battle, from fire, or from drowning. In the latter cases the only restriction respecting the age of the parties is, that the adopter shall be older than the adopted, and shall have attained his majority, or his twenty-first year; and if married, that his wife is a consenting party. In every case the party adopted must be of the age of twenty-one. The form is for the two parties to present themselves before the justice of the peace (*juge de paix*) for the place where the adopter resides, and in his presence to pass an act of mutual consent; after which the transaction, before being accounted valid, must be approved of by the tribunal of the first instance within whose jurisdiction the domicile of the adopter is. The adopted takes the name of the adopter in addition to his own; and no marriage can take place between the adopted and either the adopted or his descendants, or between two adopted children of the same individual, or between the adopted and any child who may be afterwards born to the adopter, or between the one party and the wife of the other. The adopted acquires no right of succession to the property of any relation of the adopter; but in regard to the

property of the adopter himself, it is declared that he shall have exactly the same right with a child born in wedlock, even although there should be other children born in wedlock after his adoption. It has been decided in the French court that aliens cannot be adopted.

Adoption is still practised both among the Turks and among the eastern nations. There is no adoption in the English or Scottish law.”

Those of our readers whose access to books is not easy will be pleased with this epitome of the laws of adoption. It shows that the Creator has spoken to man somewhat in agreement with man’s own measures. Adoption is made a prominent feature by Paul, and it is evident that he treats the subject in several leading particulars in accordance with the digest of Roman law. From the moment of adoption in the gospel sense, as well as in the Roman, the child in all legal respects belongs to the adoptive Father, and is subject to His new Father’s authority. He passes into His family, name, and sacred rites; and is capable of succeeding to His Father’s property.

Prior to this the child might be either the free born son of his natural father, or a slave. In the eye of the gospel of deliverance all the natural born children of Adam are slaves - made slaves by him who was the first sinner, and therefore “made sinners.” “All have sinned (in him) and come short of the glory of God.” We are all sons of God in a certain respect, for He created us and His breath is in our nostrils. But in a spiritual sense we are not His sons, for we have all been sold under sin. In this sense, then, sin is our lord, nor can we be adopted into the family of God except we are first justified from sin by faith.

It is by faith in Christ the natural born heir of the Deity, that we are adopted into His Father’s family; “for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26. “God sent forth His Son... that we might receive the adoption of sons,” Galatians 4:4,5. Whence it is plain that apart from such adoption we are not His sons; and if not sons we are not free, and not being free we are in bondage. But the Deliverer was never in bondage. God sent forth His Son, not His slave, and through Him we are received into the family. This Son’s relationship to us arose out of the circumstances that He was “made of a woman.” His being “under law” was needful that He might be proved as those who were under it. To be “under law” is not to be cursed by law, but to be thus placed for trial and perfection, Adam was “under law” while obedient; but while obedient, he was not in bondage. Bondage results from breaking the law we are under, not from keeping it. The Redeemer, therefore, having scrupulously kept the law under which He was born, was free from all condemnation.

Because of adoption “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” This use of the Syriac word Abba in connection with the Greek word *Pateer* (father), arising from a habit of the Jews in writing after they became acquainted with Greek, is to be understood from Paul to mean this: he who is adopted can now address God and say. My Lord and my Father, whereas before adoption he could not so address Him.

When the prophet wrote the words; “After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people,” there was an intended allusion to the adopted “sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty;” as may be seen from Hebrews 10:16, The choice God made of Israel at the first was prospectively an adoption through Christ, Indeed, the necessity of the Creator, He being the Redeemer, to relate Himself by blood to all mankind, which He did through His own Son, proves that Israel were not chosen outside this purpose. He, the One Supreme, is not a Being of blood, therefore. His own proper blood could not be poured out, but the blood of His own Son, styled “His own blood” (Acts 20:28), constituted the connecting link. That this Son was the hope of the faithful in Israel appears from the saying of Paul concerning Moses, who at manhood refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

So that, whether we look at the scheme in relation to the Jews or the Gentiles, the truth is manifest that through His Son the Deity predetermined to adopt into His own spiritual family as many as would receive Him, thereby abolishing the slavery under which they were held. The effect of this transfer was complete, being on the basis of justification by faith from all their own past sins as well as from the sin

imputed to them in the Garden of Eden. As for the Jews, they were not merely liberated from the further observance of their law, which had served the purpose of a schoolmaster to bring them as far as Christ, but were disenthralled, as they required to be like all other men, from the first and universal chain.

In this comprehensive view of the condition of mankind the words of John strike us with a peculiar force, producing an effect of gratitude and peace. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power (right or privilege) to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This glorious power operated through Him to whom it had been given by His Father. It was neither more nor less than the power of Sonship. It was this that gave Christ His adoptive strength, which, when imparted to the understanding of the poor bondmen in Adam, who are all their life in fear of death, makes them rejoice with the apostle, saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

Before this acceptance in Christ not the Gentiles only but the Jews also "were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." For it was the promise, not the law, that offered life and inheritance; but what was the promise without the seed to whom it was made?

The position of the Jew has been treated as though it had stood from all time, that is to say, it has not been made plain and prominent that the purport of the Abrahamic promise was its adoptive power through the coming Christ. The promise was 430 years before the law; and the divine prophecy, "I will be whom I will be," was given to Israel before they reached Sinai's foot. Israel, in their chosen state, were a miniature of the whole family of God when adopted through His own Son. They were a forecast of the Tabernacle of Jehovah with men, standing in contrast with the surrounding world of Adam's sons groaning in their chains, and seeking deliverance from their idol gods, the work of their own hands, who could neither see, nor hear, nor walk. In this living picture we recognise two families, the family of God, and the family of Satan, and the entrance of proselytes by circumcision, foreshadowed the grand season of adoption by "the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."

The ceremonial of adoption consists in an acknowledgement of our enslaved state, the recognition of Jesus as the God-provided Redeemer, immersion for induction into the name He bears, and the steadfast hope of the inheritance defined in the Word.

This being accomplished, we are divinely entitled to partake of the emblems of His body and blood, given and shed in the grand redemptive work, and henceforward are consoled with the peculiar advantages and blessings which our freedom or sonship justly confers. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." We are now, therefore, as regards relationship to the Deity placed on a level with Him who was born the Heir.

Let us briefly consider our new position. What is to be looked for now? In the first place, chastisement; "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The object of this is that we may "be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live." Our heavenly Father does not chastise all in like manner, but in proportion to their disobedience. Let not those, therefore, who are severely tried think too highly of themselves as though they were their Father's special favourites; but rather judge that such treatment is the just consequence of their shortcomings. Beside this, trial, of various measure, is needful to the purification of character and the consolidation of all virtue.

Upon this subject there is much misapprehension. Some, through divers indiscretions, burden and embarrass themselves, and then by pious self-esteem attribute their sufferings to God, while it is as natural that they should suffer as that they should get wet by jumping into a river; and it would be as rational to regard such a drenching as a special chastisement of God as to so look upon the trouble they, through

imprudence, bring upon themselves. The trials of God's children arise from unforeseen circumstances, losses, bereavements, persecution for Christ's sake. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

But we have also the assurance of God's protecting care. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him: no good will be withheld from them that walk uprightly: light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart: the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. God heareth us and answereth our prayers." "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will. He heareth us; and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." These, then are, in brief, the advantages of adoption into the family of God.

But what is all this in comparison of the final result? That which Paul styles "the redemption of our body" is the grand triumph. The healthy and strong rejoice in this prospect, but it is the sick and afflicted, the aged and infirm who yearn in a peculiar manner for this redemption. Those whose crippled limbs, failing breath, dim sight, overwrought or bewildered mind - these are they who heave the deep sighs, yea, "groan" as the apostle saith, "within themselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of their body."

Still, between robust health and deathlessness the chasm is infinitely wider than between health and decrepitude. Who can describe the flash of exultation when "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible?" And this unutterable bliss will be magnified by association. Not only ourselves and many friends whose companionship we valued, and whom we laid with bitter tears in the ground, but the grand historic characters of antiquity, the sojourners and pilgrims of the same faith and hope, the first martyrs, and among them all the great Martyr, Jesus, shall we behold. These, like bright groups of stars encircling the moon, or diamond dew sparkling on the grass and herbs, will fill our wondering sight and make us feel ashamed of our past troubles as altogether unworthy to be named in view of our "exceeding great reward." Let these joyous thoughts quicken our flagging pace. As we near the prize the eye should grow brighter, the fire glow more ardently, so that we may not seem to be expecting that for which we do not strive.

## **Born Again**

This expression occurs only four times in the Scriptures, in John and Peter. The puzzle it was to Nicodemus, when it fell from the lips of Jesus, shows that it cannot be taken in a natural sense, and that the ruler did not comprehend its spiritual meaning. The terms in which all its significance is couched are these:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But these terms must be understood before their import can be grasped. Popular instruction allots but a scanty need to this remarkable saying, and dismisses it by reference to a plunge in the waters of baptism, or even the use of a few drops, and a sensation of the Holy Ghost in the heart. It deserves, however, a more deliberate enquiry and a more extensive use of our reasoning faculties.

It is evident that, whether birth be natural or spiritual there must first be begetting, conception, and gestation; and that unless these processes are correctly carried out abortion or idiocy will ensue. We would not, however, strain the analogy; still we cannot discard all resemblance except at the risk of ruining the Divine teaching.

Our utter dependence on God for deliverance from death is seen in nothing with more clearness than in this subject of spiritual begetting. This figure declares to man his absolute helplessness in the work of his own salvation; that is to say, he cannot take the first step in the matter; though when this step is taken he can work with advantage. What we mean now is shown in the fact that no one can beget himself; no one can be the author of his own conception and birth. So it is spiritually; and inasmuch as without these

things there can be no off-spring, so it is impossible that any man can cause himself to become a child of God.

“Faith cometh by hearing the word of God.” What the womb is to natural seed, so is the ear to the word of God. That word is seed, spiritually speaking, and the Almighty is the sower of it: “of his own will begat He us with the word of truth.” “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.” The “word of the kingdom” proceeds from God; it is not the word of man, and where this has not been sown it can bring forth no fruit; but where it is sown, and nourished in the affections, it “brings forth fruit unto eternal life.” Hence the logical deduction is that eternal life is the result of the “word of the kingdom.” From this conclusion it will be allowed at once that success or failure depends, in the first place, solely upon the quality of the seed sown. Bad seed cannot produce good fruit. The first enquiry, therefore, into the saying of Jesus - “Born again” - is an enquiry into the nature of the seed, or “the word of the kingdom.” This phrase - “the word of the kingdom” - is a partial definition of the nature of the seed; explaining that the word is concerning a kingdom; or, still employing the figure of speech, the seed sown will become a world-wide theocracy in its harvest time.

This doctrine is as old as the Bible itself. Jesus borrowed it from ancient seers. “The Lord shall be king over all the earth.” Zechariah 14:9. “I shall give thee (Christ) the nations (c.v. heathen) for thine inheritance.” Psalm 2:8. “The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom.” Daniel 2:44. “And there was given Him (Christ) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him” (Christ). Daniel 7:14. And the same prophetic Spirit, speaking to John in the Isle of Patmos, saith, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 11:15.

In view of testimony so plain it is passing strange to see “ministers of the gospel” sowing seed destined to bear fruit “beyond the starry sky;” and stranger still to hear some teaching both the one thing and the other. These are certainly two different seeds; one is “the good seed,” or “the word of the kingdom to be set up over all the earth;” the other “tares,” or the word of the old pagan philosophers, not once mentioned by the prophets, Jesus, or the apostles. Among the four hundred or more occurrences of the word heaven, in the Scriptures, no allusion whatever is made to it as a place of abode in reserve for man. But instead of being invited there by God, he is told he cannot go. The harvest, therefore, which is certain to follow the sowing of such seed, will be a harvest of disappointment. God has nowhere sowed it, and will not follow it with His blessing.

After the seed has fallen into a “good and honest heart,” it begins, imperceptibly for a while, to develop; till at length the bearer finds himself impelled by these new ideas to corresponding action. This is traceable to the occasion on which he “received seed.” Having followed the counsel of Christ, “Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness”, he is now induced to consider the meaning of the latter - “His righteousness” - in order that, by the ordinance of baptism, he may give evidence that he has “put on the righteousness of God.” Being taught by the prophets and apostles that Christ is our righteousness, he weighs the facts and needs in connection with Christ. First, He is God’s own and only begotten Son. Second, He is sent into the world to do His Father’s will, to show to man the possibility of overcoming sin. Third, He is to be a sufficient sacrifice for the whole world. Forth, His death must be a voluntary offering in order to be acceptable to God. Fifth, this offering must itself be without spot. Sixth, having paid the ransom He rises to immortality as the just reward of His obedience. Seventh, He is exalted to priesthood in the presence of God, to mediate on behalf of those who accept His ransom.

These ideas duly elaborated in his own mind, our candidate for immortal honours perceives himself to have developed so far in the knowledge of the gospel as to be aware of his own nakedness and want of covering, so as to be accounted holy in the sight of God, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” The eternal Spirit has instituted but one mode of investiture. The mystical waters are before him, and his ardent cry is, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” The answering voice saith, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,” And he rejoins, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Reflection may suggest the peculiar fitness of the simple rite. Several things are implied. First, Crucifixion, Second, Death, Third, Burial, Fourth, Resurrection, Fifth, New Life. All these again afford separately matter for thought. Besides, as the ordinance is a figurative, not a real, death; it is seen to be figurative of a washing and clothing also. The intelligent subject of it is washed. He was as scarlet, he is like snow; he was as crimson, he is like will. He was as filthy; he is esteemed as clean. To the household of God he was a stranger, he is now a citizen, he was a member of the Body of Adam; he is now a member of the Body of Christ. He had no part in the covenanted inheritance; he is now a king and priest elect, awaiting promotion to power and glory. Having entered morally and doctrinally upon a new life, he now lives by faith on the Son of God who gave Himself for him.

He is nourished from day to day on “that bread which came down from heaven,” whereof if a man eat he “shall not die in the age.” (c.v. never). Every first day he visibly expresses his relation to his new Master, by eating and drinking the symbols of His sacrifice, and binding himself to Him by every cord of memory, and he is especially careful not to neglect this feast at which this Son and Redeemer is ever present by His appointed emblems. In his new life he shines as a light in the world. Men behold the integrity of his walk, the wisdom and prudence of his ways: all within the circle of his being are stimulated by his example. He is part of the “salt of the earth,” and through him men are induced to inquire after Christ. He is intellectually and morally “born again,” yea, “born of the Spirit.” “The words that I speak unto you are spirit and are life.” “Of God’s own will ye are begotten by the word of truth.”

“The words I speak are spirit.” Evidently this saying demands explanation. Words themselves are only sounds produced by the passing of breath, or air, over the larynx or organs of the throat, called the vocal chords. We would paraphrase thus: “The words I speak, are” able to transform men into “spirit.” None of the many allusions to spirit in the Scripture reveal to us what spirit is. God is spirit, but not knowing what spirit is, we do not know what God is. We cannot find out God by searching. Flesh is known; it has been examined, and its composition demonstrated; but spirit is a mystery still. We know, however, that when applied to flesh it is capable of making it immortal; Jesus became immortal flesh and bone. Though spirit. He is not a phantom; “for a phantom,” said He, “hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.” What He now is all must be, or they cannot enter the kingdom of God; - a sufficient proof, surely, that none are in that kingdom now. Jesus did not tell Nicodemus that he must be disembodied in order to enter the kingdom; but that he must “be born of the Spirit;” afterwards shewing that by such birth Nicodemus would become spirit; “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou nearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Thus our version renders the original of John 3:8. But this translation of the Greek word *pneuma* by the English word wind in this, passage does not appear at all satisfactory. The word is the same at the end of the verse as at the beginning; why not have it said therefore, “so is every one that is born of the wind,” if wind be correct in the first instance? But it is not a fact that “The wind bloweth where it listeth,” or willeth, for it can have no will in the matter; besides, to hear the sound of the wind can be of no spiritual benefit Let us read it thus:

“The spirit breathes where he wills, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

The following are Wiclif’s translation, A.D. 1380, and the Rheims translation of 1582:

Wiclif:

“The spirit brethith where he wole, thou herist his vois, but thou woost not fro whennes he cometh, ne whider he goith, so is ecche man that is borun of the spirit.”

Rheims:

“The spirit breatheth vwhere he vvil, and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowvest not vvence he commeth and vvither he goeth, so is eury one that is borne of the Spirit.”

The Eternal Spirit had breathed on Jesus, and Nicodemus heard the sound of His voice. This was the fullest measure of the Spirit, or rather unmeasured, while the same thing in a measured form was heard in the prophets and apostles. None living can explain this mysterious motive power, but even a child may be struck with its effects. Here is a mental birth of the Spirit experienced by men in the flesh; but the physical birth will change the flesh itself. Why should incorruptible flesh be thought impossible with God? Is it a greater marvel than the framework of the universe? Is it more wonderful than the globe itself, flying noiseless as a soap bubble through the air? We have seen the one but not the other; there is the difficulty. Nevertheless we possess the testimony of credible men who did see; the rest remains for faith. Jesus seems to be the only one of the dead who has been raised to immortality. The world's future is suspended on this single fact. Were it a moment doubtful we should be like some rushing comet in a trackless sky.

But though unseen, except for forty days, Jesus did more terrible work after He was "born again" than He did before. Indeed, while in the flesh He was harmless to the world, but no sooner "in the Spirit" than the work of vengeance began. It would seem that this was a foreshadowing of things to occur when those of whom were "the first fruits" shall rise and shake themselves from the dust. There is no thought so startling as that of the rising of the dead! It was the agitation of the disciples, after Jesus had gone up into heaven, that maddened the Jews and Romans. Through this His absence was more dangerous than His presence. The first birth was a shock to His enemies, but the second infinitely greater. By murdering Him they had, as it were, hastened the day of His power and brought upon them His vengeance.

"Born Again!" was now the new cry of His disciples. Everywhere they shouted, "He is risen from the dead! He is alive." We have seen Him!" This was the death-knell of the Jewish Commonwealth, and the doom of Pagan Rome. This voice went out to the ends of the world. The earth moved, the mountains were shaken, the foundations of the temples were loosened, the doors dropped from their hinges, and the idol images staggered, fell, and were dashed to pieces. He who was risen sat in the heavens guiding the tide of war, and His friends went forth "conquering and to conquer." The idol deities had prophesied many things, but they had not foretold their own ruin by a man who should be born again. This birth of the Spirit they knew not of, or denied; now their votaries "heard the sound of His voice," like the subterranean thunder that precedes the earthquake, but they could not tell whence it was, and whither it went. We have endeavoured to sketch the process, and indicate some of the results which follow from being "born again."

Edward Turney

To be continued...

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"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust."

Psalm 91:1,2.