

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 139

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Editorial

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

We recently received news of Sister Muriel Stormont from Sister Michelle Breault and I reproduce Sister Breault's letter here:

"Thank you for your letter to my grandmother, Muriel Stormont. It is nice to know that there are other people who care for her and have her in their thoughts. I hope that you will continue to remember her in your prayers.

As you may know, last November Muriel fell down the stairs and broke her neck; she suffered what is called a "hangman's break." Most people do not survive this kind of injury, but in her case the Lord determined otherwise, and she has completely recovered from her neck injuries.

While at home, prior to the accident, she wasn't taking proper care of herself, she was losing weight, she was falling and suffering minor injuries, etc., and none of us understood what was wrong. After she broke her neck, we learned that she has senile dementia which is a progressive illness. Therefore, her children had to make the very difficult decision to put her in a nursing home.

The woman she is today, emotionally and mentally, is not the woman I knew as my grandmother. Muriel was an avid reader, and especially enjoyed talking about the Scriptures, so she no longer reads, she doesn't even want anyone to read to her, and talking about the Scriptures no longer perks her up as it once did. The highlight of her days is meal time. As I'm sure you can imagine, it is very difficult to watch the progress of this illness.

Given the circumstances I think that it is best if you remove Muriel's name from your mailing list. Again, thank you for your letter. I pray that the Lord will have mercy on us all and send His beloved Son soon.

In the Master's service, Michelle Breault.

We are very grateful for your letter, Michelle, and we assure you that Muriel is very much in our prayers and our thoughts, and not only Muriel, of course but yourself and all Muriel's family; and we know there are many of you, for in a letter a few years ago, Muriel said she had 22 great-grandchildren and I expect there are a few more by now! Muriel's letters were always a great pleasure to receive and I have missed them over the last year, however, the coming of Jesus Christ cannot be far away and we look forward to the time when we shall be united in perfect health with all the faithful.

And now I quote from another letter containing very different news - from Brian Jones who has recently left the Christadelphian community:

“Thank you very much for so very kindly sending your magazine - I do hope you will put me on your mailing list. Brother Phil Parry has been a great help to me since I have known him and has sent many letters and leaflets. Some I find heavy going and others easy to understand... I have recently severed my connection with the Christadelphians... the more information I can get may help me to write and help others - particularly the younger Christadelphians, as so many are not believing quite like the older members, having never waded through R. Roberts’s and J. Thomas’s writings.

The thoughts Brother Phil has been giving me have been most uplifting - thoughts I glimpsed years ago and lost awhile. I have found the Original Sin notion terrifying at times - trying hard to be good, then things began to lift, and I was coming back into the truth when I stumbled on the Christadelphians. Of course I thought they believed as I did, until I had broken bread with them for some time, as I felt such a meeting gave me the thought of meeting on resurrection ground - but somehow or other, at the end of each service we seemed to land up on the dung heap of sin, and everyone seemed not to see the crown above their heads, thus missing the many splendored thing. Of course I knew nothing of the Birmingham Constitution until after I had been baptised. Of course I was shocked at some of the things I read therein but did not realise the Christadelphians believed that Jesus had to die for Himself until I was a member nearly three years. As their more deep doctrines were not preached about I decided to remain with them and say nothing as I liked their way of gathering and had made so many new friends. But it was getting harder and harder for me to cope with the doctrines I was beginning to recognise in magazines I was reading and as Brother Phil had written to me on one or two occasions because I had written to the press and he had read my letters, so I decided to ask him about his beliefs and to my surprise I found he and I shared the same thoughts on the Holy Scriptures... It’s a case of “Light at Eventide” for me. If I had had someone like Bro. Phil with me in 1949 when I first caught a glimpse of the truth, to follow me up, my life would have been so much different.

Of course there is nothing like reading the Bible which I do regularly each day, but I like reading helps and guides. I used to find “The Christadelphian” very stiff to read, and boring; I had to give “The Testimony” up too. I considered them a waste of money....

Yours sincerely, in the Loving Name of Jesus, Brian L. Jones.

Thank you for your letter, Brother Brian. I am sure many of our readers readily agree with you regarding the Christadelphians for some have had quite similar experiences. As a Sunday School teacher with them for nearly 40 years I was never expected to teach anything about sinful flesh or that Jesus had to die for Himself and even the Sunday School Notes on First Principles do not contain any mention of these subjects. It is often, or perhaps usually, after baptism that the full realisation of the contents of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith are brought home to anyone with all the bigotry that goes with it. For most of us Christadelphianism was a stepping stone to better things and it is our duty to encourage others to take the same step that we have taken.

A few months ago Sister Helen Brady received a letter from a Christadelphian in Australia and I quote a part: -

“On the matter of Original Sin, I do not share anyone’s ideas on such a subject, far less the Roman Catholic’s. Some of the phrases I have heard Christadelphians use over the years, particularly on the matter of “sinful flesh of Christ” make me shudder to my back teeth. However, I don’t engage in such topics, so I will comment no further. Yes, I am a Christadelphian and at the age of 66 I know most of the strengths and weaknesses of our faith,

but I also know that, if anyone is near to the truth of the Scriptures then the Christadelphian fraternity must be a leader in the field.”

How can one answer such people? Are they being true to their own beliefs? Perhaps someone would like to comment.

After sending out the last C.L. it was brought to my attention that the article “The Great Mystery of the Christian Religion” had been previously reproduced under the title “The Sacrificial Principle in Redemption” (C.L.118 December 1989). However, such an excellent article is well worth reading over and over again!

With Sincere Love to all, in the Master’s service, Russell Gregory.

THE GOLDEN CALF

This incident about which we read in Exodus 32, was a very sad one in the history of Israel. It was human nature^{*(see footnote)} at its worst. Yet from it we can learn several things, so that it is worth our while to consider the incident for a few moments.

The root cause was lack of faith; lack of faith in God and lack of faith in their leader Moses.

Deeply rooted in human nature is the desire to follow a leader; to belong to some community. We have examples of that in history, to our own day, when not so long ago the German people in two successive generations followed blindly their leaders to destruction. A better example is the life of primitive tribes who are divided into village communities, each with its own tribal head and to whom his subjects leave all their decisions to make and to whom they render a hundred percent obedience. The best example, though taken from the world, is a gang of youngsters. We have many of them in large cities, rival gangs, all with their leader who somehow by sheer bluff and noise manages to impress these youths. There is something in common to all these groups of people; as long as things go well for them they put complete trust in their leader. His word is law; they render him absolute obedience and rarely think for themselves. They are quite happy to leave the thinking to their leader and to do whatever he tells them; rather like machines with no will of their own. They idolise their leader: what he does is bound to be best in their view; but then, let something go wrong, or somebody else establish a rival claim to leadership, and the changeability of human nature appears at its worst. The person who only a short time ago was nearly a god in the sight of his followers is all of a sudden the vilest fellow who had led them into nothing but mischief. Loyalty changes to rebellion nearly instantaneously; the one who had done all the thinking for them suddenly cannot do anything right.

This unreliability of human nature was often apparent in the history of the children of Israel and an example of this is the incident we are considering now. God, by the hand of Moses, brought Israel out of Egypt “by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm.” He delivered them from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, and a little later, from the army of the Amalekites. He fed them with Manna and quails and things had generally gone well for them. It seemed that their confidence in Moses had become established by then; they promised obedience and when they were terrified at the presence of God on Mount Sinai, they had declared with one united voice “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Here was, or at least it seemed there was, complete loyalty. Yet only a little later, when they were getting anxious about Moses not coming back, they changed with such an astonishing suddenness and completeness. The same people who only shortly before said “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do,” now said, “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt; we wot not what is become of him.”

In this last sentence lies perhaps the root of the trouble; “As for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt...” They did not say anything about God having brought them out. It seemed they still lacked faith in God. In their minds, it seems, it was Moses rather than God who did the works. So, true to human nature, when they lost confidence, they turned on him. Then, when Moses returned and, at the command of God, took very drastic measures to restore loyalty, they were behind him again, almost as if nothing had happened - at least until the next incident.

Let us look at the fickleness of human nature from this point of view. When they made the golden calf they willingly gave Aaron all their jewellery; they put their whole heart and soul into it; yet after Moses restored obedience and went unto the mount the second time and returned with the new tables of the covenant, they put even more energy into the new enterprise, of making the tabernacle. They did not lack any willingness to give, for we read, they even brought more than enough. It shows how a common purpose, good or bad, can make people give to the last ounce of their energy and the last of their possessions.

How do we stand who are Israel after the Spirit? If we are hasty in condemning the children of Israel for their rebellion let us remember this: whereas their leader was absent from them for two periods of forty days and nights in order to go into the presence of God for them, ours is absent from us in body, but in the presence of God for us all the time. Do we always realise that we have a leader just as the children of Israel had in Moses? And more than a leader; a High Priest and Saviour, an Advocate with the Father, who, though absent in body, very present in spirit all the time. He sees us and observes us constantly; not like Moses, who did not actually see the Israelites make the golden calf, but only learned about it when God told him while he was on the Mount. I think we must all admit that most of our sins would not be committed if we did not fail to realise Christ’s presence. In this respect we are all rather like school-children who try to commit a misdeed when their teacher is not looking. So, in some measure we are somewhat in the same position as the Israelites during Moses’ absence. It is very easy to misjudge people when we ourselves have never been under exactly the same circumstances.

But Christ’s constant presence in spirit holds more reasons of comfort for us than grounds for warning, for, unlike the Israelites, we are not wondering what has become of our Leader. We know only too well that He died for us and rose again, and that just as Moses returned from that mountain top in Horeb, even so our Master will return, for this He promised, and unlike Moses, who, while in the Mount, learned only through God, what was going on in the camp, Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of God, sees, hears and knows for Himself what is going on everywhere and He knows what we are thinking also.

We read that the children of Israel gave of a willing heart of their possessions and labour for the making of the Tabernacle. Do we always give to the best of our ability and, if necessary, of our possessions, for the work of Christ? Are we always sincere in singing “Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.”? Whatever the shortcomings of the children of Israel, and there were many, in this they were genuine: they really did not withhold anything in their power for -the building of the Tabernacle. If ever there was an offering of willing hearts pleasing to God, it was then.

Let us then follow the Israelites after the flesh in their good example and also learn from their shortcomings. Let us do God’s service with a willing heart and let us be ever aware of the presence of Jesus Christ and take comfort in the knowledge that He, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life, directs all our paths from the cradle to the grave.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

***Footnote:** This was later changed from “nature” to “behaviour” – see correction made in our next Editorial.

THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

After Lot had departed, the Lord told Abram “Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever... Arise walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it for unto thee will I give it.” Genesis 13:14-17.

Abraham at this time was encamped between Bethel and Ai roughly centre of the Land of Promise. There is a possibility that he was standing upon a mountain, for close to this position there is one called Tell Asur, 3,333 feet high, and from this vantage point he could well view all the land; some 80 miles north and south and 30 miles east and west.

Through the eye of faith Abram was aware of the Lord’s ultimate purpose; but at this time looking at the land of promise did he perceive that in some 480 years his offspring, numbering about 2,000,000 souls would be standing on the east bank of Jordan preparing to go up and conquer the land?

In Numbers chapter 34 we have the boundaries of the land, starting at the southern tip of the Dead Sea and moving south through the wilderness of Zin, sweeping westward around Kadesh Barnea and then northward to the coast of the Great Sea at Hazar-addar. The coast forms the western boundary, then moving northward to Mount Hor, that is a little above the present day Tyre; here it sweeps inland by the way of the valley to Hanath and then turning south to Hazar Enan. The Eastern boundary passes through Riblah and Ain to the sea of Chinneroth, which we know as the Sea of Galilee, and then follows the Jordan valley to the Dead Sea.

It may be helpful here to go into a little detail of the terrain itself. The area delineated is hardly bigger than the state of Belgium. Working in from the sea we find the coastal plain broken by the promontory of Mount Carmel. Parallel to this coast we have a long line of dunes and inside this there is a fertile alluvial plain, in the south known as the Plain of Philistia and further north, the Plain of Sharon. Inside this coastal area we come to the lowland hills - country that is good farm land suitable for grain, fruit trees, olives and vines. Down the spine of the country runs a mountainous chain fissured on the western flank by numerous wide fertile valleys, well watered and ideal for fruit trees and vines; the eastern face is much steeper and dryer, unsuitable for arable crops but capable of sustaining flocks and herds. To the east of the range we have the Jordan Rift Valley. The northern section of the valley is well watered and the river can be easily forded, but as it nears the Dead Sea the river becomes deeper and the banks dryer, although there are a number of oases fed by springs. To the east of the river Jordan the ground gradually rises to the Trans-Jordan Plateau; the lower areas have well-developed grass lands and shrub suitable for raising grain crops, also for the husbandry of flocks.

While east of Jordan and before entering the Land, Moses commanded the Children of Israel saying, “This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the Lord has commanded to give to the nine tribes and the half tribe: for the tribe of the children of Reuben... and the tribe of the children of Gad... and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance... on this side Jordan eastward,” Numbers 34:13-15. During the subjugation of this area the Israelites had observed that the land was fertile and -the local tribes possessed a great multitude of cattle, and possibly due to many years of nomadic existence they desired to settle down-and establish themselves, so they approached Moses and Eliazar, the High Priest, and the princes of the congregation with the request “if we have found favour in thy sight let the land be given unto thy servant for a possession and bring us not over Jordan.” Moses quickly pointed out that the Land of Promise was to the west of Jordan, and emphasised that they had a commitment to go over Jordan and help subdue the inhabitants; only by fulfilling this commitment could they then expect the Lord’s blessing; also reminding them that an earlier failure to go up and take the land after the spies had returned, had resulted in 40 years punishment spent wandering in the wilderness. These terms were accepted - “Thy servants will do as my lord commanded. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead. But thy servants will pass over, every man that is armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my lord sayeth.” Numbers 32:25-27. And verse 33, “And Moses gave unto them, even the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto the half tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph,

the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about.”

The children of Israel led by Joshua crossed over Jordan and moved in to conquer the Promised Land. Its subjugation was to take between six and ten years as indicated in Joshua 11:18, “Joshua made war a long time with all those kings” then “the land rested from war.” (v.23). In the opening verse of chapter 13 we read, “The Lord said unto him, (Joshua) Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.” The land had yet to be inherited, although the indigenous tribes had been subdued in a series of battles, the land had not yet passed into the hands of the Israelites; in fact, there were still several nations that had not been completely conquered. It was mainly the central area of the country that had been taken, but the great sweep up the coastal plain right into Lebanon had still to be overcome and in the area of Galilee the inhabitants still held control; however, all these nations the Lord Almighty promised to drive out.

Joshua had completed two of his tasks, first, of bringing Israel over the Jordan, second, controlling of the land, but there remained the third - that of dividing the land among the remaining tribes. In obedience to the Lord’s command he called together Eleazar the priest and a prince from every tribe, all men selected and named by the Lord to divide the land by lot. Impartiality was thus secured. When we look at the map there appears to be a disproportion in the areas allotted to the various tribes. This can be explained when consideration is given to the physical features of the land: areas of scarified mountain slopes interspersed with well watered and fertile valleys and a variable rainfall. This dividing of the land and allocating specific sections to each tribe, was important for it kept the tribe together as a large family unit. It was also important because of the law of inheritance described in Numbers 27. The emphasis here is clearly upon the sense of possession rather than that of succession. According to the Law the land belonged to the family rather than the individual, therefore there was a strict entailment. The eldest son received a double portion and others an equal share of the remainder. If a man had no sons the inheritance went to his daughters, and if no daughters, to his brothers, and if no brothers, to his father’s brothers, and if no father’s brothers, to the next of kin. Any daughter who inherited had to marry into their own tribe, for to marry out of it meant foregoing the inheritance. It is clear from this law that ownership of the land was important and it was imperative that the members of each tribe should be kept in reasonably close proximity.

In Joshua 14:6 we read of the first allotment, that to the tribe of Judah. There are three Gilgals mentioned in Scripture but the most likely site referred to here was that just north of Jericho, for it was here that they encamped after crossing the river Jordan. Here there was a fertile plain, a good source of water for their flocks and herds, and their families could rest secure, bolstered by the two and a half tribes established east of the river, whilst their armed forces were away conquering the land.

Here it was, then, that Caleb came before Joshua and claimed the right of first choice of the land, because of the words spoken by the Lord to Moses and also the promise made by Moses, “Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord.” (Joshua 14:9).

Although 85 years old Caleb still felt as strong and active as he was in the days he spied out the land. He knew the land of Hebron, and the strength of the Anakims, that they dwelt in great and heavily fenced cities, and promised that if given this land he would drive them out according to the Lord’s instruction. On this basis Caleb was given the land of Hebron. The 15th chapter of the Book of Joshua is devoted to a delineation of the borders of the land apportioned to the tribe of Judah and the cities given to each family of the tribe.

It was here at Gilgal that the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, were given their allotment, and these details are given to us in Chapter 16, establishing the order of precedence among the tribes, for we read in the 1st Book of Chronicles, chapter 5 and verse 2, “of Judah came the chief ruler, but the birthright was Joseph’s.” In the details of the land assigned to Manasseh and Ephraim we are given only the borders; there is no catalogue of cities, but we find from verse 9 that there is a blurring of the border line for we read that the number of cities allocated to the children of Ephraim were among those also in the inheritance of Manasseh. It could be that these two tribes were close-knit and it would be to

Ephraim's advantage as it only had two-thirds the number of armed men of those of Manasseh. As might be expected among such a large number of people there was some discord and the children of Manasseh and Ephraim were dissatisfied with their lot. Unfortunately they had not put the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, to the sword as instructed by God, but used them as servants and complained that the Canaanites were occupying much of the Plain of Jezreel and they were unable to drive them out. In Joshua 17, verse 14 it is recorded that the elders coming before Joshua complaining that they had only been given one lot and one portion for an inheritance for a great number of people, Joshua was unmoved by their plea. He instructed them to drive out the inhabitants of the land and if this was not possible, to clear the land of forests. This left 7 tribes who gathered together at Shiloh and were chided by Joshua for not having subjugated the inhabitants of the rest of the land and taken possession of it. He instructed them to appoint three men from each of these tribes who would walk through the remaining land and bring back a detailed inventory of the land and cities, and, on their return, he and Eleazar, the chief priest, would cast lots before the Lord and divide the land accordingly.

Chapter 18 gives us a description of the borders and cities allocated to the tribe of Benjamin, an area in between Judah and Ephraim. The tribe of Simeon was allocated the southerly portion of the area originally allocated to Judah, because Judah found that their area was much too large. Zebulun was next – given an area north of the Plain of Jezreel and bordered by Manasseh on the south. Asher's lot fell on the northern coastal strip alongside Naphtali, with Issachar tucked in next to Zebulun. The last of the tribes to receive their allotment was Dan, whose possession was sandwiched between Judah in the south and Benjamin and Ephraim in the east. Unfortunately, their coastal area came under pressure from the Philistines and Amorites. We read in Judges 1 that “the children of Dan were forced into the mountains and denied the use of the villages.” Unsettled and looking for more space, they sent a contingent of armed men way up north to attack and subdue a small tribe at Leshem, and having taken possession of it renamed it Dan after their forefather. The twelve tribes having now received their land, by common consent gave Joshua himself an inheritance - the city of Timnath-Serah within the borders of Ephraim.

Having finally established the twelve tribes within their allotted borders there still remained the priestly tribe of Levi. It was essential that they be scattered throughout the country to undertake their priestly duties as required by Law. Eleazar and Joshua were approached by the leaders of the Levites; Numbers 35:8, “From them that have many ye shall give many, but them that have few ye shall give few, every one shall give of his cities according to his inheritance.” The tribe of Levi was in three family groups - the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites, and they were allocated cities in the order of priority observed during the Exodus. The first family group to receive their allotment, the Kohathites, were descended from the second son of Levi. In the travel through the wilderness their duty was to deal with all the furniture and vessels of the Tabernacle. The Gershonites were responsible for the transport and erection of the fabric and curtains of the Tabernacle, and the Merarites had as their responsibility, the bars, boards, and sockets appertaining to the Tabernacle.

Around each city that they were allocated they were apportioned an area of land sufficient to sustain themselves and their cattle. These areas are categorised in the Book of Numbers 35:3-5 delineating two areas outside the city. The first of 1,000 cubits for their cattle and a second 1,000 cubits for their vineyards and arable crops. It is fairly obvious that as the size of these cities would vary, so too would the amount of land allocated. This area of land may not appear to be of any great size but by checking one or two ancient cities of say, 600 yards in length and breadth we find that the total area allocated for livestock and arable use is an area of approximately two square miles - obviously quite adequate

The number of cities allotted to the Levites was 48, but of these, six were to be cities of refuge (Joshua 20), three on the east side of Jordan and three on the west. These cities of refuge were very necessary because the Law required the death of any murderer, but for accidentally causing a death the slayer could claim asylum in a city of refuge.

The Law defined in Numbers 35 stated that the blood defiled the land and this could not be cleansed except by the blood of the man who shed it. However, in the case of accidental death the slayer could enter a city of refuge and declare himself to the elders, namely those of the tribe of Levi, and here he would be allowed to remain safely for the rest of his life or until the death of the High Priest. Whilst he

remained in the city he was covered by the Law which laid his guilt on the High Priest and this onus was only removed by the death of the High Priest, and when the debt was cleared - a life for a life - he could return to his own city. Anyone who wilfully committed a murder would be refused asylum and returned to his own city for judgment.

At the end of Joshua 21 we read, “and the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their forefathers, and they possessed it and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest roundabout according to all that He swore unto their fathers. And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them, the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hands. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel, all came to pass.”

Having established peace in the land, Joshua was now able to release the armed men of Manasseh, Gad and Reuben from their obligation to help in the subjugation of the inhabitants of the tribes to the west of Jordan and despatch them back to their families on the east side of Jordan. “Return and get you unto your tents and unto the land of your possession which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you on the other side of Jordan.” It is worth noting that these two and a half tribes were the only ones to receive a special blessing - “return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver and with gold, and with brass, and with iron and with much raiment, and divide the spoils of your enemies with your brethren.” Joshua 22:8. There may be a feeling that these men were departing out of the land of promise by crossing over Jordan. They were moving back into the land of Sihon and Og which the Lord had delivered to them. This removed the boundary from the river Jordan to the mountain range of Gilead which separates the fertile Jordan valley region from the desert which stretches to the east.

Before their departure Joshua admonished them to be diligent in the observance of the Lord, to love the Lord their God and to walk in His ways. Departing for their homeland the warriors, on arriving at the river Jordan, erected a great altar to denote their unity with the main body of the tribes. We can imagine the consternation among the Elders of the western tribes when reports came in of the erection of this great altar similar to the one at Shiloh, and contrary to the Law of Moses, and naturally they were prepared to go to war over it. Before committing themselves however, they sent a deputation from the sanctuary at Shiloh, of ten princes, one from each tribe under the leadership of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, to ascertain the reason for this altar. In Phinehas they had a leader who was zealous in the application of the letter of the Law and who was bitterly opposed to any pagan practices. This deputation confronted the leaders of the two and a half tribes demanding an explanation, making clear how they were transgressing the Law and reminding them of the events that had taken place at Baal Peor when altars to idols had been set up, incurring the wrath of the Almighty. The deputation also implied that the area east of the Jordan was unclean, and it would be of benefit if the two and a half tribes removed themselves and with their possessions to the west side of Jordan away from any temptation.

The Elders of the accused tribes were extremely concerned at these allegations and were desperate to convince Phinehas and his deputation of their innocence, and made their defence in the most solemn term, using the three names of God, El, Elohim, and Yahweh, twice repeated, to emphasise their concern. The altar that they had erected was not for sacrifice or burnt offering, but to stand as a witness of their solidarity with the tribes on the west bank, for they feared that in future times “your children might speak unto our children, saying. What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering nor for sacrifice: but that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come. Ye have no part in the Lord.” (Joshua 22:24-27).

The explanation was fully accepted, even Phinehas was convinced and the deputation was able to make a full report back to the Elders at Shiloh, as we read in verse 33, “And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed the God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God.”

We have no indication as to the amount of time taken by the tribes to sort themselves out and move in and establish themselves in their allotted areas, but taking into account their numbers, possessions, flocks and herds, some considerable time must have elapsed. The indigenous tribes would certainly be unhelpful and loath to hand over their territories, but in their weakened state would be unable to deny the Israelites. Unfortunately, there were certain of the original tribes, such as the Philistines and the Canaanites, who, although badly beaten, had not been completely subdued and would in time cause problems; witness the pressure applied to the tribe of Dan by the Philistines and the inability of Manasseh to gain full control of the Canaanite cities along its northern border.

From the record, we know that there was peace throughout the land which lasted the rest of Joshua's lifetime, which, according to one book of reference, was some 17 years. Joshua's final task was now complete; the children of Abraham were in possession of the Land of Promise. Whether they would retain it would now depend upon their behaviour and the behaviour of their future generations.

Brother Jeff Hadley.

From Your Letters:

Brother Leo Dreifuss writes:

"I always find the C.L. interesting and instructive especially the article about "the Devil and Hell of the Bible." This series has been by far the best I have ever read on this topic. There are a few views I don't quite agree with, but on the whole, very good.

I feel I must put forward a little helpful criticism concerning the "Jesus said..." article, on page 15 of the Sept / Oct. letter, third paragraph from the bottom. You quote Zechariah 13:6 as referring to Christ's crucifixion. You are not the first to do this; I have heard it said many times, but it is wrong. Truly, Christ was wounded in the house of His friends, and much more so. He was cruelly crucified. But if you start reading from verse two onwards, you will find that it referred to the false prophets. It would be very interesting if you could insert this remark into the Chat Section to see what others have to say. You may be interested to know that soon after I was baptised (about the late 40's) I went to a public meeting (not Christadelphian) and the preacher quoted the same passage to me, asking whom it referred to. He made the same mistake of applying it to Christ, but Fred Pearce spotted it and told him so."

Thank you, Leo, for your comment. I had never thought to question whether Zechariah 13:6 referred to Christ -- I had always assumed it did, and I am grateful for the point you make. I have now looked up this verse in other translations and see I that The Amplified Bible emphasises the point you make - "those with which I was wounded when disciplined....."

Sister Evelyn Linggood writes:

"We were surprised to read your interpretation of Luke 19:27 in the "Jesus said..." section and find ourselves in total disagreement, for how could the converted third of the nation of Israel be termed His "enemies"? This would surely apply to the other two thirds, or anyone who will not have Him to reign over them; the "slaying" will be literal as other scriptures verify, e.g. Psalm 2:9-12; Revelation 19:11. "In righteousness doth He judge and make war," and verse 21 of the same chapter, if He Himself does not do the slaying it is evident He gives the orders - "with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked" - "Bring them hither before me" (Luke 19:27). Jesus is certainly the Prince of Peace but in order to achieve peace all rebels must first be annihilated. We see the same principle at work in

other scriptures, notably at the beginning of Solomon's reign of peace (which can be seen as a type of Christ's reign) when those who were likely to be a threat to him were put to death, namely Adonijah and Shimei. Many other scriptures testify to this same principle.

I thank Sister Evelyn for her letter and I will not be dogmatic but here hope to show much more support for the view expressed in the "Jesus said..." article No. 23 which appeared in the last C.L.

As is stated in Luke 19 this parable was given because the disciples thought the time had come for the establishment of the Kingdom of God; they supposed that Jesus Christ would soon be reigning from Jerusalem.

The interpretation of the parable shows that Jesus was not at that time about to set up the Kingdom of God but that He was first going away in order to receive the Kingship, His Crown, from a higher Authority. It shows also that there were those who did not want Jesus as King as is shown also in the next chapter, Luke 20 in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen who said, "this is the heir, come, let us kill him." The fact that Jesus would be away for some considerable time is seen by His allocating responsibilities to His servants (His disciples) which were to be carried out in His absence. [The word "occupy" is translated from the Greek word '*pragmatieuomai*' from which we have our English word 'pragmatic' and which, in its best sense, means "relating to affairs of state"].

So far we are probably in general agreement, but then we come to the return of the nobleman, or Jesus, and we have "those enemies which would not that I should reign over them..." and here we have to consider whether or not any other nation or peoples are included in this parable - does the parable refer only to the nation of Israel or is it extended to include other nations?

Let us suppose for the moment that only Israel is involved, then we see that the enemies Jesus refers to at the end of His parable must also be Jews. However, at the time when Jesus Christ comes again to the nation of Israel they will already have been judged, for they are the first nation to be judged and this will be completed before Jesus Christ is made known to the Remnant who come "through the fire." Those who survive are those who have turned to God and called upon Him for deliverance; God hears them, as we read in Zechariah, "I will say, It is my people, and they will say, the Lord is my God."

So how is it that Jesus is able to call these people His enemies? There is a precedent in Scripture - the Apostle Paul, or Saul as he was first known. For Saul was certainly an enemy of Jesus Christ, persecuting and causing havoc in the church, committing believers to prison; yet later, when the Apostle speaks of this time he says he "was zealous toward God," even while he was an enemy of Jesus Christ. And more than this, for in the vision to Ananias, who was to baptise Saul the Lord said, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles"

So here we see four things in common to both the nation of Israel at the return of Jesus Christ and to Saul before his conversion;

- a) they were zealous toward God;
- b) but not knowing the Son of God;
- c) they were enemies of the Son of God when they were brought before Him;
- d) they are chosen of God to bear His Name before the Gentiles.

Just as Saul was brought before Jesus Christ on the Damascus road and spoke directly with Him, even so will the Jews, or their leaders, be brought before Him and speak directly with Him.

That all are enemies of Jesus Christ before their conversion is confirmed by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:21, where he writes, "and you who were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight..." Again, in Romans 5:10 the Apostle writes, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Regarding “slaying” let us again turn to the Apostle Paul, to Romans 6:5-8, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him...” “Our old man is crucified,” or slain, even so will the Remnant of Israel be slain when they are brought before Jesus Christ, their Messiah.

When we think of Jesus Christ and the elect fighting against the enemies of Jesus we should not think of them as using the sorts of weapons that mortals use. The concept of Jesus Christ or the Saints literally wielding swords must most surely be put from our minds in favour of a spiritual application. First the natural, then the spiritual. When we are changed in the twinkling of an eye we shall not again regress to the natural. However, the nation of Israel is destined to be God’s battle-axe, and these are of course, mortal people and will use man’s weapons - aided by miraculous means as when Israel entered the Promised Land led by Joshua.

With specific reference to Psalm 2:9-12 where we read, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” This is certainly the subduing of the nations by Israel but it does not entail Jesus having His enemies brought before Him and literally put to death, but Israel is here instructing the kings and judges of the earth to serve the Lord as the only way to live - the alternative is death.

Turning next to Revelation 19:11 we read, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war...” This vision which John saw is probably another view of the vision of Revelation 12:7, “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels...” The “angels” of Michael being Israel (Joshua 5:14) and the “angels” of the dragon being the kings and judges of the earth who are exhorted to serve the Lord, and rejoice - else they will perish. Isaiah 11:4 also reveals the same picture, “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” The “breath of his lips” and “the rod of his mouth” are not instructions to others to kill; it is the Gospel of salvation, setting forth truth, righteousness, goodness and life eternal - the proclamation of His lips by which the righteous live and the wicked are slain - the “two-edged sword” which proceeds out of His mouth, by which all are judged, those who accept Him die with Him (die to their past in baptism in order to live for ever) and those who do not accept Him die without Him. A two-edged weapon more to be feared than any two-edged sword of man’s making. (Hebrews 4:12).

It may be appropriate here to refer to Psalm 149:5-9, “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand: to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people: to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written (Deuteronomy 7:1-16): this honour have all the saints.”

The reason for quoting this Psalm is to question whether or not the saints referred to are the Elect, who will at this time be with Jesus Christ as His Bride, or to the nation of Israel.

There are two words translated “saints” in the Old Testament, ‘*qadosh*’ (sometimes spelt ‘*qaddish*’) which is variously translated ‘holy,’ ‘Holy,’ Holy One,’ or ‘saint.’

The other word is ‘*chasid*’ and means ‘gracious, or ‘kind’ and is translated ‘good,’ ‘godly man,’ ‘holy,’ or ‘saint.’

‘*Qadosh*’ has the higher spiritual application and appears to refer to the Elect, while ‘*chasid*’ is applied to converted Israel.

In Psalm 149 the word '*chasicid*' is used and is therefore not the Bride of Christ; it is the nation of Israel.

Finally, with reference to Solomon's need to put to death those who were a threat to his reign, and the reference here is to 1 Kings 2:13-46, none of these were brought before him to be put to death in his presence. When Jesus Christ sets up His Kingdom those who are any threat to Him will be driven from Him for destruction, not brought to Him. That is the marked difference between the "slaying" of those who accept Him and those who reject Him; those who will accept Him are brought before Him, while those who will not are driven away.

Brother Russell Gregory.

“CREATION” “VERY GOOD” - MAN INCLUDED

HUMAN FLESH CONDEMNED, OR SIN?

That there was a beginning to the heavens and the earth cannot be denied. The Creator of them had no beginning but is from eternity, a fact beyond man's comprehension. Belief and faith is necessary if God is to reward any who diligently seek Him who is the self-existent Creator of all things, revealing His plan and purpose through His servants the Prophets (Amos 3:7) (Isaiah 45:18).

The writer to the Hebrews, in verse one, says, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;" showing the finality of God's speaking through the Prophets. This verse also shows the plurality of worlds and the Scriptures reveal three successive ones from creation - the Adamic world of Noah's time that then was and perished, being overflowed with water, and the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:5-7). Then after this there is the world to come of which Paul writes to the Hebrews, a world over which Jesus is to have the dominion as foreordained of God from the beginning. Hebrews 2:5, "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak..." "But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God [and not on account of His nature], should taste death for every man." (Verses 8 & 9).

Paul enlightens us further on this in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 - we see all things in subjection to Christ Jesus, and finally. God All in All.

Knowing the end therefore, let us go back to the beginning and ask ourselves, If God knew all man's history from Creation why did He not produce Jesus instead of Adam?" Does not Scripture teach "first that which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual? Was not Adam given the opportunity to prove a worthiness to attain to the spiritual under obedience and faith, and failed? Is this why we see not yet all things put under him and his natural descendants, but that out of them must also evolve a worthiness of spiritual attainment under a new man? This is what the record in Genesis is meant to convey, and to prove the capability of Adam to be obedient if he set his mind to it; that another man of like nature succeeded where he failed. Not only was this so in regard to obedience personally, but Jesus, by a voluntary submission to His Father's Will to redeem man from the apparent hopeless situation of being fruitful and replenishing the earth for complete habitation, was able to pay the debt of life forfeited to the Law by Adam's sin. We shall I hope, see and appreciate this when we consider the record in Genesis and the light by revelation to Paul and taught in his Epistle to the Romans in the fifth chapter.

It has often been remarked that the first few chapters of Genesis do not reveal all we would like to know. This is true, for as a matter of interest, where does it say that when Adam's sin brought the penalty of death (or loss of life) upon, him in the day he sinned that this also passed upon all men? It does not say so in Genesis. All it reveals concerns Adam's corruptible or decaying nature being dependant on the nutritious food in the garden of Eden for natural life and existence as a living soul of flesh and blood as God created him. We find this confirmed in Genesis 2:9, trees "pleasant to the sight and good for food;" and, here we have a separate and distinctive feature, "the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

There seems to be no apparent restriction to their eating of the tree of life, but the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden and the penalty, death in the day of eating. It is passing strange that some have interpreted this as a life sentence requiring also a change of nature to bring about death when the person under the restrictive law is already the subject of decay and ultimate return to dust if not modified to spirit nature - "Dust thou art."

It is annoying when people who refute the erroneous teaching of the immortality of the soul direct attention to the Genesis account of the creation of Adam from the dust of the ground as a living soul, to confirm the fact of his dying nature and yet teach that this very capability of dying was brought about on account of Adam's sin. In fact, no change of nature occurred with Adam, so that what Adam really incurred by his sin was a debt; he owed his life to the Divine Law he had violated. Thus the people who use Genesis to refute immortal-soulism are in a similar erroneous position and are forced to invent theories not in harmony with Scripture to extricate themselves from their dilemma.

Some have suggested that Adam would have lived on indefinitely as long as he ate of the Tree of Life, but such a state of nature is not equal to that of the Angels and I hope to prove from Scripture that the Tree of Life was not there for this purpose, but as long as Adam reserved by obedience his right to eat of it, everlasting spirit nature could be conferred on him by the Creator. The other trees were there for the purpose of keeping Adam alive in his natural state, like the rest of the animal creation.

We are not left in darkness therefore for the answers to what seems to be missing on the surface of the record in Genesis, God has revealed it by His Spirit in the Prophets and the Apostles of Jesus, especially Paul who said in his Epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 3; "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of, God which is given me to youward: how that by revelation he hath made known, unto me the mystery... Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel... and to make all men see what is the fellow ship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If we accept the truth of Paul's words to the Ephesians then we can rely also on what he says of the events in Genesis concerning Adam and Eve, both what is plain reading and what is hidden under the surface and requiring belief and faith in the Creator, for the writer to the Hebrews declares "Now faith is the substance (confidence) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, for by it the elders received a good report... But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:1 & 6. See also Romans 8:24.

We are instructed by Paul that God had an eternal purpose with the true Ecclesia of Christ, and in Christ, and that this wisdom and purpose might be known by the Church, namely the mystery (secret) of the purpose of God and why He created all things by (on account of) Jesus Christ. I can quite understand that if God's central and eternal purpose was with a single man with no female agency to reproduce and replenish the earth with individuals of a like character as Himself and pleasing to His Father, then it must be brought about in a different way than by natural and physical reproduction through male and female. We have a grand figure of this shown in the fact of God's word, "It is not good that man should be alone, I

will make him an help meet for him.” God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and with a rib from his side by a pain-less operation, made He a woman and brought her to him, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. “Be fruitful and multiply” was the Divine injunction to them. In this we see Paul’s meaning in Romans 5:14 that Adam was a figure of Him that was to come, i.e. Jesus Christ, the new man and beginning of a new creation - the Spiritual out of the natural. We see the idea of male and female to produce their own species to replenish or refill the earth, for God created it not in vain. He formed it to be inhabited, but by people who held Him in respect and obeyed His will.

This natural creation has not elevated itself to that required perfection; yet God foresaw this and Adam’s sin, and made provision in the form of another man, His only begotten Son of Mary, prefigured in Genesis as “the seed of the woman” in contrast with the seed of the serpent.” In contradistinction with Adam, this man’s bride would be produced from His side without the administering of an anaesthetic as in Adam’s case, and result in a multitudinous Body of His members and likeness, a Bride not of Jew or Greek, not of bond or free, not male and female, but one in Him, and taken out of Him by the shedding of His blood and the experience of suffering and pain; ultimately presented unto Him as a Bride, “a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:27.

Nowhere but in God’s Book the Bible, do we have presented to us in such beautiful and allegorical language the purpose of God with Adam and with Jesus, the two federal heads, both natural human beings first, but the latter attaining to the spiritual. “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Hebrews 1:9.

Eve was a part of Adam’s body before God’s wonderful work in creating her as a female and helpmeet for him and presenting her to him. In like manner the Bride of Christ, (His Church, or Body), must first be a part of Him, or in Him, before being fashioned to His likeness in character and stature and presented to Him. They must therefore have associated themselves with His death, which was real and inflicted by the shedding of blood. This mode of relationship was not by physical means but in symbol, by burial into His death by a substitutional method authorised of God and as a result of belief and faith in the reason for the death of Christ as a sacrifice - an immersion in water and a rising to newness of life after dying unto Sin both federal and personal, thus passing from death to life. All achieved by legal and spiritual means through the work of God in Christ, culminating in the manifestation of the sons of God for which the whole creation waits knowingly and unknowingly, groaning and travailing in pain.

It may be asked “Why was all this necessary, we never find such teaching in Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Islam, Hindu, Buddhist, and many other cults of the world?” Quite so, because God has chosen to reveal His purpose through holy men who respected His laws from the time of Adam’s history, and revealed it by the spoken word and through written scrolls which when completed became known as the teachings of the Old and New Covenants relating to God’s salvation offered to man.

You may ask “What salvation?” To answer this we must go back to Genesis, the beginning of our history from Adam and Eve. There must have been a period with Adam and Eve when there was no necessity nor any reason to be “saved,” for this is the meaning of “salvation,” the word “salvage” can also be used if the “life” of a man is used in the place of the word “property,” which latter covers other things like for example, cargo from a wreckage. But in the case of Adam and salvation we are considering his natural life in the blood which he lost by sin, but regained by the salvation, or re-purchase by an equivalent life free from debt. This life being given in the person of Jesus Christ, a fact we hope to demonstrate as we proceed but of which you have been given a preview.

I am satisfied that the six days of creation consisted in an “evening-and-morning day” equal to the Sabbath day observed by Israel, and which God told them to remember and keep holy; and so in the process of bringing the earth out of darkness and chaos, we are told in Genesis what God did from the first day to the seventh on which He rested, not of necessity but as an example of what man would need for his own good in the future, and of a greater and more glorious extended rest that His people could enjoy in a nature not subject to death.

In God's creation there was no haphazard way of doing things but complete order of priority. There was no logic in creating corruptible creatures first, when they depended on food to live, consequently we are told in Genesis 1:11,12 that at the word of God the earth brought forth grass, herbs, trees etc., in readiness for those who needed it for sustenance. See also Genesis 1:27-31 confirming this very thing. Added to this is more detail concerning man's creation from the dust of the ground and by means of breathing of the breath of life, becoming a living soul his being placed in a special garden where there were trees pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8,9), this latter tree God commanded Adam not to eat, "For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." God did not say "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt begin to decay from that time and after some years succumb to death and return to the ground." If this had been the case then the penalty upon Adam would have proved to be a life-sentence of 930 years from which there was no reprieve, not an inflicted death in the day of his sin which the term, "surely die" means in the Hebrew language and scripture.

Anyone reading Ezekiel 18 with a discriminating and discerning mind would see this because those referred to, wicked and righteous, all eventually die natural deaths "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is a reference to an inflicted judicial death under Divine Law, and not to man's corruptible nature, and should never be wrested out of the context of Ezekiel 18 to combat the immortal-soul theory.

In the consideration of the garden of Eden record. Divine Law is the paramount lesson in the development of character; hence Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I do not believe that the fruit would contain the power of imparting knowledge of good or evil, or any ingredient to cause decay and ultimate death; if such were the case the former was much quicker in operation than the latter. It was the act and violation of God's Law that brought into operation the enlightenment of knowledge of good and evil, and the realisation that judicial penalty of death was the legal sentence they were under on the day of transgression. I cannot conceive how Adam would understand it in any other way on the understanding that the evening and the morning constituted one day out of the six in the creation. I believe God intended Adam to understand what was said to him, otherwise how could He be just in condemning the sin? Please note here, it was not Adam's nature that was at fault but his mind under development of law in the formation of character to fit him for a superior life without end; hence the Tree of Life. I do not believe Adam ever ate of the Tree of Life, though the right was his so long as he was obedient. I do not believe, as some do, that he was eating of the Tree to sustain his natural existence – if this was so the rest of the animal creation would need to eat of it also, being of the same nature; not only so, but there would have been no need to expel Adam from the garden lest he should eat of it after his transgression; God could have done this at a later period if the eating only conferred a temporary sustenance for natural existence which the other trees were already doing. Genesis 2:9.

Adam partook of the forbidden tree and the penalty of death was upon him, and here I believe was fulfilled the words in 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." After all, God's intention for man was everlasting life for habitation in a world He created and loved. If Adam had been put to death we would never have existed, but God provided a substitute in the slaying of, I believe, a lamb in the securing of a covering for Adam's sin, described as nakedness before God not before themselves. This lamb typified Jesus who died on Calvary to take away the sin of the world - which God loved, not the world that now is and is enmity against God. James 4:4.

The love of God also involves justice and mercy, and there is no doubt that He must be justified in condemning the sin of Adam and Eve and the penalty of death owed to His Law. He had foreseen a way out in the provision of another Son who would justify the condemnation of Adam's sin by proving it was possible in the exact physical nature in which Adam transgressed, to be obedient, but furthermore to suffer the penalty of death Adam had incurred, thus releasing Adam and all in his loins that they might live out their limits of natural existence and by belief in I Jesus and acknowledgement of the meaning and reason of His voluntary death associate symbolically by water immersion into the same, rise to newness of life in Him and thereby gain the right to the real Tree of Life and eat and live for ever.

I believe that all animal sacrifices offered by men of understanding and faith in God emanated from what God did for Adam and Eve, and were types of Him who was to come, even Jesus Christ. As John Baptist pointed out to two of his disciples and looking at Jesus cried out “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin (singular = Adam’s) of the world.” The circumstances of the sin of Adam and Eve are not all revealed in Genesis, but I believe there may have been mitigating circumstances which contributed to their failure to realise the seriousness of God’s command. Men of strong faith and of the same ‘very good’ nature in which the first sin was committed have also failed and committed worse things than Adam and Eve. Cain slew Abel his brother; David instituted the death of Uriah to secure his widow, and there are many more examples that can be found in the Bible and in present everyday life.

One thing that I had not realised so strikingly before are the words God addressed to Adam in Genesis 3:17, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying. Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” Here Adam is faced with a promise of continuance of life, not the prospect of death and because of what God has said to Eve in regard to her seed and when as yet she had no children, Adam calls her Eve, because she was the mother of all living. As a result of this “the Lord God made coats of skins and clothed them.” I regard this as the typical covering of sin of which Jesus was the antitype. Paul’s words come to mind “put ye on the Lord Jesus and make not provision for the flesh.” What we do not know is what Eve had said to Adam, but we do know that she was deceived by the serpent but Adam was not. So was he deceived by the woman? Only God knew and only He could judge.

May we prepare ourselves as a worthy Bride of Christ taken from His side, a Glorious Church to rejoice with the Bridegroom after the travail of His soul. Isaiah 53:10 & 11.

Brother Phil Parry.

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Editorial comment:

In “The Testimony” issues of July 1988 and July 1992, there appears to be an all out effort to convince the Christadelphian membership of the scriptural validity of the teachings of Robert Roberts as contained in the Birmingham Statement of Faith, and further endorsed by such men as C.C.Walker, A.H.Nicholls, W.F.Barling, and A.D.Norris to name some former Editors of “The Christadelphian” and well known contributors of that magazine.

In a pamphlet printed in 1959 entitled “Outrage on Justice” the author gives convincing proof of statements made by John Carter which made his own position as Editor untenable if he had any honour at all, and which knocked the very bottom, weak as it was, out of the foundation of Christadelphianism: the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. In “The Christadelphian” 1958 John Carter refutes all the teaching of Robert Roberts regarding human nature being synonymous of sin including that of Jesus; he refutes the similar views expressed by W.F.Barling and A.D.Norris. Here is a short extract from the magazine for August 1958; “Jesus, although of our nature, was not a child of wrath... there is no inheritance of any personal condemnation... the theory which makes the Son of God a child of wrath is self-condemned... the possession of a nature conferred by birth brings no liability for punishment.... it is an outrage on justice to talk of estrangement as a result of something a person cannot help.” - J. Carter. And on page 372 of “The Christadelphian” for 1958 John Carter writes; “To talk of ‘inherited’ sin is to talk jargon.”

J. Wilkins of Downend, writing in “The Christadelphian” in 1965 endorsed the Roberts and Barling doctrines of inherited sin in the flesh - that human nature is sin and is the devil. The Editor, L.G.Sargent refuted the whole doctrine upon which the Christadelphian faith is based, here are his words: - “Human nature is not ‘sin,’ human nature is not ‘the devil.’ It was not human nature that was condemned but sin, in all its manifestations and wherever it had sway.”

The Editors of "The Christadelphian" in 1958 and 1965 failed to stop the mouths of the "Testimony" writers in 1984-1988 and now in 1992. They are stating the same errors and are talking jargon. Is it their last pathetic appeal for the Roberts regime before the ship sinks?

The pamphlets "Outrage on Justice" (1959) and "Christadelphian Crisis" (1965) are available for proof to those who would deny that they are in error as Christadelphians.

Vatican Closer to Israel.

Israel and the Vatican have established a joint commission to smooth the establishment of diplomatic relations. Israel has re-established normal ties with 36 countries in the last two years and Middle East peace talks are reaching an interesting stage. Even Russia could not resist being part of the action and one of Gorbachev's last head-of-state actions was to recognise Israel. Now the Vatican does not want to miss out.

Rome has always been at the centre of political events seeking to preserve her influence over nations and peoples, power and wealth. The Catholic ethic has always had a theological difficulty with Jewry concerning the death of Jesus, blaming the Jews for "deicide" i.e. God-slaying, which is a contradiction in terms and a total misconception of the matter anyway. But now the Mideast situation calls for an establishment of a presence and preparations are under way, for example, to ease the Vatican's hitherto insistence of Jerusalem as an international city. Rome is identified as the city on seven hills in Revelation 17 who will exert a great evil influence over the nations but which will be destroyed by fire. Even now it is seeking to extend its presence into the heart of the Middle East difficulties.

From "Present Day Events"