

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 145

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In this Issue:-

Page 1	Editorial	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 4	A Rational Faith Without a Creed	Brother Ernest Brady
Page 6	The Wise Men. An exhortation.	Brother Leo Dreifuss
Page 8	A Defence of our Belief and Support of Paul's Declaration that the Faithful are Raised Incorruptible.	Brother Phil Parry
Page 11	Jesus said... No.25.	
Page 12	Further extract from "The Temple at the Time of Christ"	Dr Edersheim

Editorial

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

We have received a letter from Sister Myrtle James's daughter, Betty, in which she says, "I sadly inform you that Mom passed away in May of this year. It is a great loss to her family and she is sorely missed. Mom was a very dear lady with very strong faith. Although we have no contact with others in our faith she remained faithful to her beliefs and fell asleep to await the resurrection, as did my Dad."

About 20 years ago Brother Les and Sister Myrtle James came to England with their daughter, Marylou, and while staying in Bournemouth met several Brethren and Sisters, some of whom have fallen asleep also while those remaining remember them with love and affection.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with her family and we all long for that Great Day of our Lord's coming when we shall meet together with all of like precious faith.

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When clearing my desk after sending out the last Circular Letter I found a note reminding me to say that Sister Rene Parry had had a hip replacement operation and was going on well. Please accept my apologies for missing this out of the last issue. Now there is further news for Sister Rene has now had her other hip operated on. Brother Phil brought her out of hospital on Monday, 22nd November, and I understand that she is doing well and is in no pain from the operation, and the District Nurse is calling occasionally to check that all is well. Brother Phil writes, "Rene and I thank all for their kind letters, cards and Good Wishes." Phil and Rene also send their Love and Kind Regards to all the Brethren and Sisters at this season and for the New Year. I know all the Brethren and Sisters wish you well, Rene, and may God bless you and keep you in His loving care.

Sister Audrey Bundy writes, "Paul counselled us to exhort one another and the more so as we see the day approaching, but all we seem to get are subjects which cause strife and discord. It matters very little whether Ezekiel's Temple is future or not and it doesn't affect our salvation. What is wrong is if the subject continues in argument and destroys the feeling of love and peace in the Fellowship. If it is a matter of doctrine then it is important but we should decide what is most important in our walk to the Kingdom. There are too many things in this life to be vigilant about without having discord among the Brethren and Sisters."

I feel very sad that anyone should think there is discord or strife caused by the letters published in the Circular Letter. Do others feel the same? If so do please write and let me know for it is something which must be put right. Personally I have always welcomed the views of others and I know that everyone corresponding in the Circular Letter is going to base their thoughts on the Scriptures, which, after all, have been "written for our learning." We are all in agreement on matters of doctrine necessary for salvation.

It has been my wish to introduce other Bible topics into the Circular Letter in just the same way we would talk together if we were to meet in one another's homes. In what better way could we spend our time than in studying the Scriptures together? If any feel that the letters in the Circular Letter are too argumentative could it be because we express ourselves differently when we write than when we talk face to face? Or perhaps is it because we cannot see and hear each other and so do not pick up those all important little gestures by which we convey to each other all is well even when we disagree?

The Apostle Paul wrote (Philippians 2:3), "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." I am sure all our correspondents bear this in mind when writing. However, do please let me know of any ways in which we can improve the Circular Letter.

Sister Audrey sends her love to all the Brethren and Sisters.

And now to those letters regarding Ezekiel's Temple...!

Brother Phil Parry writes, "Your comments on page 13 (C.L.144, Sept/Oct 1993) re Ezekiel's Temple I found to be more acceptable and nearer the truth than the view held by some of a future fulfilment. To take God's words to Ezekiel in chapter 43:10,11 as referring to a post Christian Era does not make sense when in fact Ezekiel was told what to do while the Jews were in Babylonian captivity for having forsaken the ordinances and the holiness that pertained to Him (Jesus) who was the true pattern and form and measurement of the type, both regarding the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple built by Solomon.

I should have known that Ezekiel would have to be of the Levitical order, and Ezekiel 1:3 confirms he was a priest, but if his work and witness is to be in the Christian Era I would have thought it would be related to the order of Christ's Priesthood (after the order of Melchizedec) and not after Aaron. Furthermore, if sincere Jews are to build this Temple in the future, are they likely to be in a state of shame or carelessness? Would they not be paying due attention to what was required? And what of the ordinances? These were according to the Law of Moses which has been done away in Christ. Why then revert to it? This yoke which the Apostle said, "Neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." (Acts 15:10). Consider also Stephen's witness (Acts 7:43-53).

I see the future as now - God dwelling in the hearts and minds of mankind, not in temples made with hands where modern false religions and 'false-prophet' traditionalists want to put Him and worship Him in their own way.

I think Brother Russell, you have more or less echoed these same thoughts, especially the mention of the Jews mourning over what they had read and heard concerning their ancestors rejecting the Messiah, and witnessing for themselves the imprints of the nails and the spear in a revealed Messiah now returned from Heaven."

And Sister Linggood writes expressing a different view:- "I'm afraid we don't find ourselves in agreement upon your thinking that Ezekiel's Temple was the one built after the Babylonian captivity. We believe it to be the Millennial Temple which will be the house of prayer for all the mortal population of the earth, as surely they will need a focal point where they can worship the Lord - Ezekiel 43:7 reads- "And he (the Lord) said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne and the place of the souls of my feet where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever and my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile" etc., surely this is the language of the Millennium; and then in chapter 47, the phenomenon of the healing waters issuing from the Sanctuary watering the trees which were for meat and medicine - verse 12 - because the waters issued out of the Sanctuary, then chapter 45, the Temple is bound up with the dividing of the land to the tribes of Israel which is enlarged upon in chapters 47 and 48; and notice it includes all the tribes of Israel which is required to fulfil Ezekiel 37:15-22. It was Judah together with Benjamin and Levi which was taken into Babylon and it was largely Judah which returned, the northern Kingdom of Israel had been deported by the Assyrians some years before Judah was taken by the Babylonians and it was still largely Judah (Jews) which inhabited the land in the time of Christ. Moreover, the building of the Temple follows naturally on the conversion of Israel, Ezekiel 39:22-29.

You have drawn attention to Ezekiel 43:10-11 saying “the Jews will not have to mourn and be ashamed all over again.” No they will not because evidently this refers to the same event as Zechariah 12:10; the building of the Temple would give them fresh hope of a settled life. Zechariah 6:12-13 speaks of a Temple to be built in the future and it seems sacrifices will be made - Jeremiah 33: 14-22. These will no doubt be memorial in character - a looking back to the Sacrifice of Christ, because seeing Him alive, as they will, they will be apt to forget that He once died for them; we must not lose sight of the fact that what applies to the saints (the Church) does not apply to Israel after the flesh as they were to be “blinded” until after the Church is completed - “until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” Romans 11:25,26, “then (Emphatic Diaglott) shall all Israel be saved, as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” and not until then will God make a new covenant with them “when He shall take away their sins.” The Church is described as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ, whereas Israel after the flesh is described in conversion as an adulterous wife returning to her Husband (God) again.

Brother Leo Dreifuss writes, “Now to Ezekiel’s vision. I still think it refers to a future Temple. However, as to your view about it being the one built at the time of Zerubbabel and Ezra, I doubt it. The one described by Ezekiel is a building of tremendous splendour, perhaps even more so than Solomon’s. The one of Ezra’s time was nothing like it, though it became a great one at Herod’s time. But we will not be dogmatic about it.”

I wish to thank you all for your comments and observations regarding Ezekiel’s Temple. The more I study these nine chapters - Ezekiel 40-48 - the more difficulties I see. Some of the references are certainly to the future as Sister Evelyn points out with regard to Ezekiel 43:7 and 47:1-13. It was the consideration of Ezekiel 47:1-13, the phenomenon of the healing waters that prompted me to write the “Jesus said...” article in this issue. However, I still think the measurements of the Temple given in chapters 40 to 42, which are identical to those of Solomon’s Temple, makes it far too small for future use as a house of prayer for all people (Isaiah 56:7). The Temple building being only about 100 feet in length and half that in width, making the floor area of about 5,000 square feet (Compare that with the floor area of your own home and you will realise just how small the Temple was). Even with the courts surrounding the Temple building there is still insufficient space for a large gathering of people.

Brother Leo mentions the great splendour of the Temple, but I would expect any future Temple in the Kingdom age to be of far greater splendour in all aspects than that described by Ezekiel.

There is another point, too, which I noticed only a few weeks ago, and it concerns the tribes of Israel and their allocation of the land. While I understand and appreciate Sister Evelyn’s point regarding the tribes of Judah and Israel being allocated land, there seems a problem regarding the promise made to Abraham of which we read in Genesis 15:18, “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates’.” Israel has never occupied all this land and it is generally believed to refer to the future, but Ezekiel’s prophecy does not fulfil this promise but allocates only about half the area. So what is the answer? Ezekiel’s allocation of the land certainly agrees with the area occupied by Israel after their captivities.

Referring again to Ezekiel 43:7, “The place of my throne, and the place of the souls of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever” we surely see this applies to the future, so let us look at Revelation 11:19, to the time following the judgment of the nations, the destroying of those who destroy the earth. We here see the Temple of God opened in Heaven, and there is seen in His Temple the Ark of His Testament. I suggest this is the occasion when the saints, who have been raised and caught up to meet their Lord, are being presented before His Father in Heaven. The next event is recorded in Revelation 21:2, 3, “And I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them” which I see as the time when the saints commence their reign with Christ as kings and priests (or perhaps, as kingly priests); and following this we read in verse 22 that John, “saw no Temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.”

First the natural then the Spiritual. First the Temple building, of which there have been three in Israel of old - the place where men could meet with God; then, in the future, we have “the place of my throne, the place of the souls of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever,” which place

does not have to be a Temple made with hands; but those who go up to Jerusalem will see a greater glory than ever we can imagine at the present time.

My conclusion is that these nine chapters can be divided up into sections, parts relating to Ezekiel's own day, some of it possibly relating to the time of Jesus' first coming, and part still future to that; and if anyone should ask how it is I can feel justified in dividing these chapters in this way then look at Isaiah 61:1,2, where the translators put in a comma - Jesus put in 2000 years! Who could have done this except Jesus? And thereby He set a precedent.

Regarding the articles on the Temple at the Time of Christ, Brother Leo writes, "I find these articles by Dr Edersheim very interesting. They help you to understand some of the background to the New Testament."

My Sincere Love to all, and may next year see our Lord's return; your brother in His service,

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

A RATIONAL FAITH WITHOUT A CREED

The Nazarene Fellowship has no constitution, creed or statement of faith outside the pages of the Bible. It has reached its present understanding by reading and discussion of Scripture and study of any and every variety of opinion, past and present. If or when anyone feels that he can show that any point is in conflict with reason or revelation, we are glad to discuss it, for if we are wrong our chief concern is to get it right, but we do not attach much value to tradition.

The Things Concerning the Kingdom of God:

The visible world and every form of life in it was created in the beginning by the Eternal God. Within the limits of the natural laws by which they are governed, all things, including man, remain as they were created, very good. (Genesis 1:31).

Man is a corruptible creature with the same physical nature as the lower animals, but being made in the image of God he has a free will and the capacity for reason. To develop character he had to experience good and evil, and for this purpose Adam was placed under law. By disobedience he brought himself under sentence of death. This was man's first lesson in religion – that sinners deserve to die. His second lesson was that God was merciful, because he was spared the judicial death he had incurred. God's ultimate purpose revealed in the Bible is to bring the whole creation to perfection under the reign of Jesus Christ, and establish it for ever in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. This is the Hope of Israel - the true Gospel.

The selection of a people worthy to take part in that purpose has been proceeding throughout history by the preaching of this Gospel, and will continue until the literal return of Christ to the earth from His present dwelling with the Father. Those who by faith and obedience have shown themselves acceptable to God are recorded in the Book of Life and will be called from their graves in incorruptible nature as the heirs of everlasting life, to live and reign with Christ in eternity.

This is the resurrection of the righteous.

The Things Concerning The Name of Jesus:

The rite of sacrifice introduced in Eden and defined in the Law of Moses, teaches God's way and calls for the exercise of that faith by which He is honoured. In making an offering in which the life of an animal was taken away by blood-shedding, the sinner acknowledged his guilt and unfitness to live and recognised that he could only be saved by reason of God's mercy.

But the animal sacrifices were only a temporary expedient and could not give effective deliverance because the life of an animal was not a true equivalent for the life of a man; they pointed to the sacrifice of Christ.

The life which had been lost by sin could only be redeemed by a human life. No descendant of Adam could give his life as a ransom, since the life of every natural born man is a continuation of the life which was forfeited, and thus death as a deferred penalty or debt hangs over the human race. Therefore it is evident that man could only be saved from extinction by one whose life was not derived by natural descent, who was not a sinner and who was prepared voluntarily to sacrifice himself. Such was Jesus. As a child of Mary He was a man of flesh and blood related to the race and of exactly the same corruptible nature, but as Son of God His life came to Him direct from the Source. In His temptation and physical suffering, Jesus proved that human nature of itself is not in anyway defective, and showed by His example that obedience to the commandments is in fact within the capacity of everyone. Conscience serves to convict us all as sinners personally, but in order that mercy might prevail and one redemptive sacrifice redeem a multitude of people. God regards all Adam's descendants as having lost their life in his and become alienated with him.

This is the federal principle. When He allowed His murderers to nail Him to the Cross, Jesus submitted to a penalty He did not deserve and a condemnation which was utterly unjust in order to cancel, by the surrender of His own life, the debt owed by sinners. Jesus paid at Calvary the debt incurred in Eden. Had it been inflicted upon the sinner he would have perished and the human race would never have been. Jesus being sinless, was able to suffer the death and not perish, and being raised from the grave in incorruptible spirit nature He ascended to His Father and now awaits the appointed time for his return to reign upon the earth. Thus God provided in His own Son the one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, a life for a life, and purchased back to Himself all those who put on the name of Jesus who are alienated from Him by sin. Jesus as the heir of all things and God's representative on earth, in carrying out His Father's plan for our salvation by laying down His life as our substitute, upheld justice and law by meeting its claim and at the same time demonstrated supreme love and mercy.

To believe these things and to be immersed in water as a symbol of the death which Jesus suffered for us literally is Christian Baptism and is the condition of forgiveness of sins and acceptance into the Kingdom of God.

Things We Do Not Believe

It sometimes happens that people read or hear these explanations and realise that they are reasonable and Scriptural, and they imagine that they are what they believe themselves, whereas, in fact, they hold views which are quite incompatible with them. We therefore append a list of some of the things which we consider are destructive to the True Gospel:

We do not believe in immortal souls, heaven-going, or a personal devil.

We do not believe in the Trinity, that Jesus pre-existed, or that He had Divine nature.

We do not believe in Sin-in-the-flesh, or that people are born sinful.

We do not believe that natural death is the wages of sin.

We do not believe that Jesus died for Himself.

We do not believe that those asleep in Christ will rise mortal.

We do not believe that immersion for personal sins without recognition of the Federal Principle is Christian Baptism.

Brother Ernest Brady.

THE WISE MEN

An exhortation

This is the season at which the birth of our Lord and Saviour is generally remembered; although the date of His birth is not revealed in the Scriptures and the keeping of Christmas is not based on the Bible. A few thoughts on the events connected with the birth of Jesus Christ will nevertheless be of some help to us.

This afternoon, we want to consider in particular what we read about the visit of the wise men from the east. Actually, this was not just an ordinary visit, but they came to worship. They saw a star, and by it they were guided to the place where the young child was. Like the children of Israel, as they wandered through the wilderness. God guided them through the darkness by means of His light, and like the children of Israel of old, these wise men faithfully and persistently followed the divine light until they came to the place they sought.

God gives light to His followers, literal, or spiritual. "The entrance of thy words giveth light," so said the Psalmist; and it is for us to follow the light God gives us, wherever it leads. Responsibility comes by enlightenment. Among the governments of the world who lay down the law to their subjects, the general guiding principle is that ignorance of the law is no excuse for not keeping it. But God's principle is "Sin is not imputed where there is no law," and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

We also notice the endurance and persistence with which these men from the east followed that star, until they reached the end of their journey. Yes, endurance to the end, that is essential; not starting on the right path and then dropping out. "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved."

There comes to mind the life of Paul, a supreme example of a Christian who faithfully kept on until the end. In the earlier part of his Christian life his aim was the incorruptible crown of eternal life. Far from giving the impression that having merely begun right, it was impossible to lose eternal life, he wrote thus - (1 Corinthians 9:26,27) - "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Or, Philippians 3:11,12, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect..." But at the end of his probation, after consistently following the divine call, he was able to say (2 Timothy 4:7,8), "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing."

One of the first questions asked soon after creation was that of God asking Adam, "Where art thou?" That was God calling to the man who had sinned and hid himself out of shame which sin had brought on. All that follows after was centred round the one divine purpose of providing a Saviour, the perfect sacrifice for sin, who alone could cleanse the believer's conscience from sin and so remove this sense of guilt first felt by Adam. And now, early on in the New Testament, following close on the account of how God's word became flesh at last, after some 5000 years since its first promise, we have the question asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

The first question recorded in the Old Testament is God calling to shame faced Adam, "Where art thou?" The first question recorded in the New Testament is that of the wise men seeking out God manifest in the flesh, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

In a part of the chapter we have read together we are told of Herod's threat to the young child and how God frustrated it. An angel appeared to Joseph, first to warn him and to send him to Egypt, and again after the danger was past, to bring him back to Israel. After his return a new danger threatened the child, and again God warned him in a dream to turn aside into Galilee, This is a supreme example how the angels protect God's servants against dangers beyond their control. It agrees with the inspired Psalmist's statement (Psalm 34:7), "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." He

delivers from dangers seen and unseen, if we trust in Him. But it does not justify our taking risks. When Christ grew up, His mother and foster father no doubt told Him of all these dangers that had beset Him in His early childhood and how His Father delivered Him out of them all,

So Christ knew not only from the Scriptures, but also from what He no doubt learned about His own early childhood, the power of God's protection and of the Psalmist's statement just quoted. He was the only one who experienced divine protection on so many occasions. It is remarkable that when He grew to full manhood and had been introduced into God's ministry at Jordan, one of His first temptations in the wilderness was that of taking a risk: the temptation to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple to see whether God would protect Him or not. But, as always, He conquered temptation by "the word of His Father." "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Divine protection in unforeseen danger is one thing; and I think we can all say we experienced that some time in our lives in some moment of rashness, just escaping an accident, but exposing ourselves to danger deliberately and expecting God to protect us is sin.

It was very unusual indeed for wise men to seek after a little child. Had they been the ordinary type of worldly wise men they would no doubt have sought after the great philosophers and teachers of their day, but none of these could direct them to the little baby at Bethlehem. Only God's prophetic word could, where we read in Micah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

These wise men sought the divine wisdom, and they sought it in the right place, the Old Testament, the only written word of God then in existence. It was there where they found Solomon's counsel, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). In fact, the very one whom they had come to worship confirmed Solomon's proverb later during His ministry when He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The wise men of the world possess a great deal of knowledge, but it is based on wrong principles. It leaves God out of it. Worldly wisdom and philosophy attributes nothing or little to God; it appeals to the proud. But those wise men from the east put God first, and rightly based their wisdom upon Him. And then, having attained to the right beginning of knowledge, we must try to learn more about God and His Son from the written word, and follow the light God gives us.

The man on whose address part of this exhortation is based, belongs to the Liverpool City Scripture Gift mission, and the poster which he put up at his assembly hall, or chapel, bearing this year's Christmas Message, carries a very good exhortation. It reads: "Wise men still seek after Jesus." Yes, the ones who possess godly wisdom still seek after Jesus, to this day. Wise men still seek after Jesus is good counsel, not only for this season, but for all the year round, all the time.

This is generally taken to be the time when People make New Year resolutions. We do not care too much for this idea; a good resolution can be made at any time, and often is made many times, but unfortunately also broken, or even abandoned many times whatever day it was first made. But if we want to make some resolution suitable for all the time let it be that of consistent seeking after Jesus and what He has revealed to us and commanded us.

Let us be wise men and seek after Jesus to the end of our probation with the same endurance with which the wise men from the east followed the star to the very end of their journey,

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

A Defence of our Belief and Support of Paul's Declaration that the faithful in Christ shall be raised incorruptible at his coming.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

We, of the Nazarene Fellowship confess that after the way which a certain contentious sect of our day calls heresy, so worship we the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets: and have hope toward God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and unjust, but not simultaneously at the coming of Christ. This they do not allow, though we have always exercised ourselves, to have consciences void of offence toward God, and toward, men. Let these same say if they have found any evil in us, except it be for this one voice which we CRY standing among them, touching the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption which is in Christ, which qualifies us for the resurrection of the just if Christ remains away and we fall asleep in him.

Certainly Paul was preaching and advancing the importance of the resurrection of Christ to show the Jews that they had killed the "Prince of Life", a man approved of God among them by many infallible signs and wonders, but he further asserts that He who raised Christ from the dead will also raise the faithful by his spirit power, "For when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory." Should we tremble at such a thought? Felix did not tremble at this the resurrection of the just, but what Paul told him about the judgment to come, at the resurrection of the unjust. No doubt Felix had cause to tremble, unlike King Agrippa who after all did allow Paul to, speak for himself and did know most of the customs and questions of the Jewish religion and not a misrepresentation of it, and could therefore form an unbiased judgment Of Paul's defence. We have not, and are not, blessed with any King Agrippa's or persons like Festus who possessed reason and logic, so we have to be content to abide by the fact that "if our gospel be hid it is hid to them who are lost, and those who are responsible may indeed experience the resurrection of the unjust at the end of the thousand years' reign of Christ.

The question before us is not that it is a thing incredible that God should raise the dead, but the order and election of the two classes mentioned in the Scriptures. Jesus, we must all accept, was the embodiment of the Word of God, and therefore his spoken words were not haphazard or uttered with the feeling of nonchalance, but in harmony with His Father's will and Plan. Let us dwell upon the words therefore which he expresses, and take note of the order of merit. Luke 20:55, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the Angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead but of the living: for all live unto him. That is, all God's children live unto him and will therefore be subjects of the resurrection of life.

Let me again stress the order of merit which Jesus (who is the resurrection and the life) uses, for he should know.

1. Those accounted worthy to obtain that world (The Kingdom of God).
2. They therefore qualify for the resurrection from the dead, neither can they die any more for they are equal to the angels: and are the children of God... "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus and if ye be Christ's then are ye Abrahams seed and heirs according to the promise."

In the light of this testimony of Jesus how can anyone contend that at His coming there will be a resurrection of the dead, faithful and unfaithful, and after this it will be judged who is worthy to obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God? This is directly opposed to what Jesus says is the case, and can only be held by people who are misinformed on the subject, or who cannot harmonise it with erroneous views held concerning the judgment. It is in their own interests therefore to have more respect for the Christ they profess to believe in, and to hearken to his word. If Jesus had said no more on this subject, it should have been enough to convince anyone that only the accepted of him are the subjects of the first resurrection, but we need not leave it there if we would require further confirmation, and read with understanding.

I appeal once again to the words of Him who is “The Way, the Truth and the life.” Matt. 19:27-50. “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?” And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you (i.e. the 12), that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” That is, these Jews who had first priority to the oracles of God and His calling, if they neglected so great salvation would not be among the chosen but would at the appropriate time be cast out into outer darkness. So the last shall be first and the first last: for many be called but few chosen. What then of the twelve thrones? We have again the witness of Jesus, Revelation ch. 20, at the time of the binding of Satan for a thousand years. Verse 4 - “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; (these who sat on the thrones were not being judged but were given authority to judge or rule), and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God and which had not worshipped the beast neither his image... And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and Holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.” In view of this, can those who believe that the unfaithful rise at the first resurrection, believe also that they are blessed and holy, and that on such the second death hath no power? To believe such is the height of absurdity. Let such therefore find a sensible and scriptural alternative, for there is no alternative to truth if one desires light and life. If there are those who, for reasons known only to themselves, cannot differentiate between the resurrection of the just and of the unjust, then Jesus is not among them, neither is Paul. Jesus, in commending such who helped the needy and destitute says, “And thou shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

There is another “recompense” mentioned in the Scriptures but this is not one of blessing and reward, but of vengeance. “Vengeance is mine, I will ‘recompense,’ saith the Lord.” When can this be but at the resurrection of the unjust? “How long O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Revelation 6, v.10. Paul is every bit in harmony with Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:22, “Even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” In between we have the period of Christ’s reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Which brings us to the time and period when the nations Gog and Magog, having been deceived by Satan released from his bondage of a thousand years, are destroyed by God’s fiery judgments together with that Satan who deceived them, the latter being cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death, where the beast and the false prophet are.

John says (Revelation 20:11): “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.” The Apostle Peter speaks of this in his second Epistle ch.3, v.10, in which the heavens and the earth pass away - no place found for them, says John. So they are dissolved. Can it be any plainer? Nevertheless, says Peter, “we, according to his promises look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” John not only looked for a new heaven and a new earth, but was permitted in vision to see it by signs and symbols. But before the latter he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works.

I must admit that in the past I have read this account rather superficially thinking that it is just and unjust standing before God, but a closer examination will show this view to be incorrect. “I saw the dead,” says John, “standing before God.” Can dead people stand? Why of course not; they must be alive in order to stand. But John does not describe them as living but dead. And he goes on to say that “the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them. Why? Because these were their rightful owners’, this was where they belonged. They, in my view, were the rest of the dead who were not subjects of the first resurrection but were nevertheless amenable to the judgment of God and the second death by reason of the things recorded in the books. Those whose names were in the Book of Life have

already been accounted worthy of Eternal Life and are not seen by John as the dead standing before God. The words of Jesus, I feel sure, are still applicable to the faithful during the millennium as they were when he uttered them during his ministry. “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Jesus leaves no doubt that there is a resurrection of life and there is a resurrection of damnation, the latter cannot be the resurrection Paul was striving to attain unto - Philippians 3:10-14 - but that to which Jesus made reference in Luke 20:35. It is worthy of note that from verse 11 of Rev. 20 to the end John mentions nothing concerning the faithful; all he mentions is “the dead”, and death and hell, and judgment out of the books that recorded their works. Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. We are told that death and hell were cast into the lake of fire; how could this be done unless those who were the constituents of the same and abode in death, were one and the same?

This in fact is a recording of what Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:26 - “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” All who were cast into the lake of fire were the personification of sin and death, constituting those from Genesis to Revelation, and including the betrayers and murderers of Christ and his beloved servants of all ages. They are those who have sown to the flesh and have reaped corruption, having chosen by their works to abide in death. In bondage to the Devil.

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” says Paul, “neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” So it is obvious that those who come forth with bodies either capable of inheriting incorruption or capable of inheriting corruption, and it is therefore obvious that those whose names are in the book of life will have come forth incorruptible, and those whose names are not in it, will come forth corruptible to experience judicial death. The first death in Genesis which Adam merited by sin, was judicial and was the death which Jesus suffered for all, by blood-shedding, but the second death is also judicial but in this case, having rejected the Sacrifice of Christ, those who are guilty are amenable to it, and also as a consequence of their works of the flesh; and when I say ‘works of the flesh’, I am not referring to its physical quality but to the unlawful actions committed as opposed to those who cultivate the fruits of the Spirit,

Compare Romans 7:4-8 and Galatians 5:16-24. See also Ephesians 2:1-8.

We have a booklet dealing with where leaders were wrong about “Redemption, Resurrection and Judgment”; an analysis of much misunderstood doctrines. Except for my personal views in Revelation 20:11-15, most of the subject is dealt with, but how in any case anyone can misunderstand the first six verses of Revelation 20 is beyond me.

So that we shall have no doubts at all as to the subjects of the first resurrection, John declares that they had died for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God - and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. “This is the first resurrection.” Revelation 20:5. Verse 6, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of His Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.” Can anyone wish to have it stated more plainly than this? Do we require that John should state the third time that the subjects of the first resurrection lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years and all others, but these did not live again until the thousand years were finished? Should anyone be so foolish, and declare John’s statements to be put under the heading of doctrines to be rejected? To those who oppose our views should you not amend Clauses 24 and 29 of the Christadelphian B.A.S.F? Surely you should realise that your description of the first resurrection (Clause 24) should be worded as a general one, rather than in Clause 29 which you speak of as a reign of grace under God for a thousand years? Surely in six thousand years up to the coming of Christ you should have more rejected, than in a thousand years under the direct rule of Christ? Your wording is correct in Clause 29, but incorrect in Clause 24 as by now, if you have read the foregoing defence, you should realise, unless you prefer to be blinded by tradition.

Quotations such as 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 2:19 are conspicuous by their absence in Clause 24, and especially should the latter quotation be noted. Would it be Paul’s hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing for the unfaithful and disobedient to be in the presence of Jesus Christ at his coming? Yet Clause 24 emphasises that this is the case, and not only so, but places the period of the second death at the beginning of the thousand years instead of the end, where it is specifically mentioned. But we are well aware that things have to be twisted, added to, or taken out of context, to fit

misunderstood and misguided theories, so the analysis referred to on the cover of our booklet should be a great help to those who desire enlightenment on the subject rather than invented theories handed down and forced upon them under threat of excommunication, why listen to blind leaders whose counsel is to burn our literature? It has got to such a state now, that if I were seen handing some Christadelphian literature to a Christadelphian, that member would be advised by a fellow member in a so-called superior capacity, to burn it. This is the intolerable state into which misrepresentation of others and consequent indoctrination has brought them. The invitation “Come let us reason together” seems to be lost on them, yet God holds out that invitation to the worst of sinners.

I feel sure that it is not the will of the members of the Nazarene Fellowship to stand before a general assize and witness the weeping and gnashing of teeth of any who are cast out, especially sincere misguided people, and I doubt if they will have to. It is, however, those who are cast out of the inheritance of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who weep and gnash their teeth because they are permitted to see the patriarchs in the Kingdom of God just prior to the second death at the end of the thousand years. It is our wish to reason together with all, and rightly divide the word of truth, not wrest it out of its context to bolster up erroneous theories, and if we refuse to ‘do this, we are refusing to listen to him who speaks from heaven, in favour of those who have declared they are past the investigating stage. We of the Nazarene Fellowship believe we have been called to comprise the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven etc. (Heb. 12) and our faithful conduct will justify our names being enrolled or written in heaven, and we shall not have to wait for a judgment at his coming to determine whether our names are to be written in the book of life. Paul confirms this in Rom. 8:27-39. What a glorious hope to have through the love of God which is in Christ Jesus! There is no fear in this love, but perfect love casteth out fear.” If we fear at all, let it be, lest, a promise being left us of entering into God’s Rest, any should seem to come short of it. For unto us the gospel has been preached as well as unto the Jews of Mosaic economy. We are pleased and honoured to pass it on to those who have ears to hear.

Brother Phil Parry

Jesus said...

No.25.

“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.” – John 4:14.

Water is the great essential for life, and we cannot live many days without it. Thirst is the warning sign of our need for water and drinking satisfies the need and quenches the thirst. In this story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, Jesus lifts this natural desire onto the spiritual plane.

The translation as we have it in the Authorised Version does not show the difference in the words used by Jesus and the Samaritan, for she spoke of the well as a pit, or cistern, a place where water is collected and kept, but Jesus used the word ‘pege’ which is translated ‘fountain’ several times in the Book of Revelation. Again, the word for ‘springing up’ is, in Acts 3:8 translated ‘leaping up’ where “a certain man lame from his mother’s womb” whom Peter took “by the hand... and he leaping up, stood and walked... walking and leaping and praising God.” What Jesus said to the woman at the well was “...but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain of water leaping up unto eternal life.”

A little before this Jesus had said to the Samaritan, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Was this living water the gift of God? Jesus was Himself the gift of God, as He said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” But Jesus also had a gift for the world, for it is “He... which giveth life unto the world.” (John 6:33). “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given the Son to have life in himself.” (John 5:26). Jesus laid down His life for the life of the world, “cut off, but not for himself.” (Daniel 9:26). Jesus gives this fountain of living waters; all this woman had to do was to ask Him, and He would have given her “this living water.”

It is perhaps surprising that Jesus should reveal so much to someone outside the covenant relationship of Israel, a person of dubious or questionable character - a woman who had had five husbands "and he whom thou now hast is not thine husband;" but this woman typifies the world, thirsting after some satisfaction in life wherever it can be found. Perhaps the woman herself did not realise her thirst but Jesus recognised it and directed it towards a very satisfying end - never again need she thirst, for Jesus had provided the living water. And this message was no longer just for Israel, but the Gentiles also; indeed, to all who will come to Jesus prepared to do whatsoever He commands them.

The illustration of living water is also used in the Old Testament by the prophets. In Jeremiah 2:13 we read, "... for they (the Israelites) have forsaken the fountain of living waters." Had the people not forsaken the Lord their God what promises and blessings would have been theirs! "If ye will obey... ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me... a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5,6). But all the 'might have beens' are past and the fulfilment of God's purpose is soon to be realised in His good time as we read in Joel, "In that day ... a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord" (Joel 3:18). In Zechariah 14:8, "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem," and again, Ezekiel 47:1, "waters issued out from under the threshold of the house..."

These prophecies foreshadowed eternal life through Jesus, through His sacrifice, and are further illustrated in Revelation 7:17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall... lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Revelation 21 tells us this is after the New Jerusalem has descended from heaven, and verse 6 reads, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." And symbolic of the abundance of life brought about by the law going forth from the New Jerusalem we read in chapter 22, verse 1, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

This followed by the last appeal in the Scriptures to mankind; Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Russell.

Further extract from

“THE TEMPLE AT THE TIME OF CHRIST”

Sacrifices: Their Order and Their Meaning

"There are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Hebrews 8:4,5.

It is a curious fact, but sadly significant, that modern Judaism should declare neither sacrifices nor a Levitical priesthood to belong to the essence of the Old Testament; that, in fact, they had been foreign elements imported into it - tolerated, indeed, by Moses, but against which the prophets earnestly protested and incessantly laboured. The only arguments by which this strange statement is supported are, that the Book of Deuteronomy contains merely a brief summary, not a detailed repetition, of sacrificial ordinances, and that such passages as Isaiah 1:11, etc., Micah 6:6, etc., inveigh against sacrifices offered without real repentance or change of mind. Yet this is anti-sacrificial, or, as we may call it, anti-spiritual, tendency is really of much earlier date. For the sacrifices of the Old Testament were not mere outward observances - a sort of work-righteousness which justified the offerer by the fact of his obedience since "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Hebrews 10:4.

Symbolism of the Sacrifices

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbolical and typical. An outward observance without any real inward meaning is only a ceremony. But a rite which has a present spiritual meaning is a symbol; and if, besides, it also points to a future reality, conveying at the same time, by anticipation, the blessing that is yet to appear, it is a type. Thus the Old Testament sacrifices were not only symbols, nor yet merely predictions by fact (as prophecy is a prediction by word), but they already conveyed to the believing Israelite the blessing that was to flow from the future reality to which they pointed. Hence the service of the letter and the work-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ran directly contrary to this hope of faith and spiritual view of sacrifices, which placed all on the level of sinners to be saved by the substitution of another, to whom they pointed. Afterwards, when the destruction of the Temple rendered its services impossible, another and most cogent reason was added for the trying to substitute other things, such as prayers, fasts, etc., in room of the sacrifices. Therefore, although none of the older Rabbis has ventured on such an assertion as that of modern Judaism, the tendency must have been increasingly in that direction. In fact, it had become a necessity - since to declare sacrifices of the essence of Judaism would have been to pronounce modern Judaism an impossibility. But thereby also the synagogue has given sentence against itself, and by disowning sacrifices has placed itself outside the pale of the Old Testament.

Sacrifices the Centre of the Old Testament.

Every unprejudiced reader of the Bible must feel that sacrifices constitute the centre of the Old Testament. Indeed, were this the place, we might argue from their universality that, along with the acknowledgment of a Divine power, the dim remembrance of a happy past, and the hope of a happier future, sacrifices belonged to the primeval traditions which mankind inherited from Paradise. To sacrifice seems as 'natural' to man as to pray; the one indicates what he feels about himself, the other what he feels about God. The one means a felt need of propitiation; the other a felt sense of dependence.

The Idea of Substitution

"The fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament is that of substitution, which again seems to imply everything else - atonement and redemption, vicarious punishment and forgiveness. The firstfruits go for the whole products; the firstlings for the flock; the redemption-money for that which cannot be offered; and the life of the sacrifice, which is in its blood (Leviticus 17:11), for the life of the sacrificer. Hence also the strict prohibition to partake of the blood. Even in the 'Korban,' gift (Mark 7:11), or free-will offering, it is still the gift for the giver. This idea of substitution, as introduced, adopted, and sanctioned by God Himself, is expressed by the sacrificial term rendered in our version "atonement," but which really means covering, the substitute in the acceptance of God taking the place of, and so covering, as it were, the person of the offerer. Hence the Scriptural experience: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalm 32:1,2); and perhaps also the Scriptural prayer: "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed" (Psalm 84:9). Such sacrifices, however, necessarily pointed to a mediatorial priesthood, through whom alike they and the purified worshippers should be brought near to God, and kept in fellowship with Him. Yet these priests themselves continually changed; their own persons and services needed purification, and their sacrifices required constant renewal, since, in the nature of it, such substitution could not be perfect. In short, all this was symbolical (of man's need. God's mercy, and His covenant), and typical, till He should come to whom it all pointed, and who had all along given reality to it; He whose Priesthood was perfect, and who on a perfect altar brought a perfect sacrifice, once for all - a perfect Substitute and a perfect Mediator. (Hebrews 10:1-24).

The Paschal Lamb

At the very threshold of the Mosaic dispensation stands the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb connected with the redemption of Israel, and which in many respects must be regarded as typical, or rather anticipatory, of all the others. But there was one sacrifice which, even under the Old Testament, required no renewal. It was when God had entered into covenant relationship with Israel, and Israel became the "people of God." Then Moses sprinkled "the blood of the covenant" on the altar and on the people. (Exodus 24). On the ground of this covenant-sacrifice all others rested. (Psalm 50:5). These were, then, either sacrifices of

communion with God, or else intended to restore that communion when it had been disturbed or dimmed through sin and trespass: sacrifices in communion, or for communion with God. To the former class belong the burnt- and the peace-offerings; to the latter, the sin- and the trespass-offerings. But, as without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, every service and every worshipper had, so to speak, to be purified by blood, and the mediatorial agency of the priest-hood called in to bring near to God, and to convey the assurance of acceptance.

Bloody and Unbloody Offerings.

The readiest, but perhaps the most superficial, arrangement of sacrifices is into bloody and unbloody. The latter, or 'Minchah,' included, besides the meat- and drink-offering, the first sheaf at the Passover, the two loaves at Pentecost and the shewbread. The meat-offering was only brought alone in two instances - the priest's offering (Leviticus 7:12) and the jealousy (Numbers 5:15), to which Jewish tradition adds the meat-offerings mentioned in Leviticus 2. If in Leviticus 5:11 a meat-offering is allowed in cases of extreme poverty as a substitute for a sin-offering, this only further proves the substitutionary character of sacrifices. From all this it will be evident that, as a general rule, the meat-offering cannot be regarded as separate from the other or bloody sacrifices, In proof of this, it always varied in quantity, according to the kind of sacrifice which it accompanied. (Numbers 15:1-12; 28:1-12; 29:1, etc.).

The Requisites of Sacrifice

The general requisites of all sacrifices were - that they should be brought of such things, in such place and manner, and through such mediatorial agency, as God had appointed. Thus the choice and the appointment of the mode of approaching Him, were to be all of God. Then it was a first principle that every sacrifice must be of such things as had belonged to the offerer. None other could represent him or take his place before God. Hence the Pharisees were right when, in opposition to the Sadducees, they carried it that all public sacrifices '(which were offered for the nation as a whole) should be purchased, not from voluntary contributions, but from the regular Temple revenues. Next, all animal sacrifices were to be free of blemishes (of which the Rabbis enumerate seventy-three), and all unbloody offerings to be without admixture of leaven or of honey; the latter probably because, from its tendency to fermentation or corruption, it resembles leaven. For a similar reason salt, as the symbol of incorruption, was to be added to all sacrifices. Hence we read in Mark 9:49 "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;" that is, as the salt is added to the sacrifice symbolically to point to its incorruption, so -the reality and permanence of our Christian lives will be brought out by the fire of the great day, when what is wood, hay, and stubble shall be consumed; while that which is real shall prove itself incorruptible, having had the fire applied to it.

The Creatures Appointed

In Scripture three kinds of four-footed beasts - oxen, sheep and goats; and two of birds - turtle-doves and young pigeons - are appointed for sacrifices. The latter, except in certain purifications, are only allowed as substitutes for other sacrifices in case of poverty. Hence also no direction is given either as to their age or sex, though the Rabbis hold that the turtle-doves (which were common birds of passage) should be fully grown, and the domestic pigeons young birds. But, as in the various sacrifices of oxen, sheep, and goats there were differences of age and sex, the Jews enumerate twelve sacrifices, to which as many terms in Scripture correspond. The Paschal lamb and that for the trespass-offerings required to be males, as well as all burnt- and all public sacrifices. The latter 'made void the Sabbath and defilement,' i.e. they superseded the law of Sabbath rest (Matthew 12:5), and might be continued, notwithstanding one kind of Levitical defilement - that of death.

The Eleven Sacrifices of the Rabbis

The Rabbis, who are very fond of subtle distinctions, also speak of public sacrifices that resembled the private (When the congregation had sinned through ignorance - Leviticus 4:13; Numbers 15:24-26), and of private sacrifices that resemble the public, in that they also 'made void the Sabbath and defilement*' (The Paschal lamb, and the high-priest's bullock for a sin-offering and ram for a burnt-offering on the Day of Atonement). Altogether they enumerate eleven public sacrifices, viz. the daily sacrifices; the additional for the Sabbath; for the New Moon; the Passover sacrifices; the lamb when the sheaf is waved; the Pentecostal

sacrifices; those brought with the two first loaves; New Year's; Atonement Day sacrifices; those on the first day of, and those on the octave of 'Tabernacles.' Private sacrifices they classify as those on account of sins by word or deed; those on account of what concerned the body (such as various defilements); those on account of property (firstlings, tithes); those on account of festive seasons; and those on account of vows or promises. Yet another division of sacrifices was into those due, or prescribed, and those voluntary. For the latter nothing could be used that had previously been vowed, since it would already belong unto God.

Holy and Less Holy

Of far greater importance is the arrangement of sacrifices into the most holy and the less holy, which is founded on Scripture (Leviticus 6:17; 7:1; 14:13). Certain meat-offerings (Leviticus 2:3, 10; 6:17; 10:12), and all burnt-, sin-, and trespass-sacrifices, as well as all public peace-offerings, were most holy. Such were to be offered or sacrificed in one of the more holy places; they were slain at the north side of the altar (the less holy at the east or south side); and they were either not partaken of at all, or else only by the officiating priests, and within the court of the Temple. The skins of the most holy sacrifices, except such as were wholly burnt, belonged to the priests; those of the less holy to the offerers. In the latter case they also partook of their flesh the only exception being the firstlings, which were eaten by the priests alone. The Rabbis attach ten comparative degrees of sanctity to sacrifices; and it is interesting to mark that of these the first belonged to the blood of the sin-offering; the second to the burnt-offering; the third to the sin-offering itself; and the fourth to the trespass-offering. Lastly, all sacrifices had to be brought before actual sunset, although the unconsumed flesh might smoulder on the altar till next dawn.

The Acts of Sacrifice

The Rabbis mention the following five acts as belonging to the offerer of a sacrifice: the laying on of hands, slaying, skinning, cutting up, and washing the inwards. These five were strictly priestly functions; catching up the blood, sprinkling it, lighting the altar fire, laying on the wood, bringing up the pieces, and all else done at the altar itself.

The whole service must have been exceedingly solemn. Having first been duly purified, a man brought his sacrifice himself "before the Lord" - anciently, to "the door of the Tabernacle" (Leviticus 1:3; 4:4), where the altar of burnt-offering was (Exodus 40:6), and in the Temple into the Great Court. If the sacrifice was most, holy, he entered by the northern; of less holy, by the southern gate. Next he placed it so as to face the west, or the Most Holy Place, in order thus literally to bring it before the Lord. To this the apostle refers, in Romans 12:1, he beseeches us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God.

Laying On of Hands

This was only the commencement of the service. Women might bring their sacrifices into the Great Court; but they might not perform the second rite - that of laying on of hands. This meant transmission and delegation, and implied representation; so that it really pointed to the substitution of the sacrifice for the sacrificer. Hence it was always accompanied by confession of sin and prayer. It was thus done. The sacrifice was so turned that the person confessing looked towards the west, while he laid his hands between the horns of the sacrifice, and if the sacrifice was brought by more than one, each had to lay on his hands. It is not quite a settled point whether one or both hands were laid on; but all are agreed that it was to be done 'with one's whole force' - as it were, to lay one's whole weight upon the substitute. (Children, the blind, the deaf, those out of their mind, and non-Israelites were not allowed to lay on hands). If a person under vow had died, his heir-at-law took his place. The only public sacrifices in which hands were laid on were those for sins of public ignorance (Leviticus 4:15; 16:21), when the 'Elders' acted as representing the people - to which some Rabbinical authorities add public sin-offerings in general (on the grounds of 2 Chronicles 29:23), and the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, on which the high-priest laid his hands. In all private sacrifices, except firstlings, tithes, and the Paschal lamb, hands were laid on, and, while doing so, the following prayer was repeated: "I entreat, O Jehovah: I have sinned, I have done perversely, I have rebelled, I have committed (naming his sin, trespass, or, in case of a burnt-offering, the breach of positive or negative command); but I return in repentance, and let this be for my atonement (covering)." According to Maimonides, in peace-offerings a record of God's praise, rather than a confession of sins, was spoken. But,

as the principle prevailed that frequent confession even without sacrifice was meritorious, another formula is also recorded, in which the allusion to sacrifices is omitted.

Closely connected with this was 'the lifting and the waving' of certain sacrifices. The priest put his hands under those of the offerer, and moved the sacrifice upwards and downwards, right and left; according to Abarbanel also 'forwards and backwards.' The lamb of the leper's trespass-offering was waved before it was slain (Leviticus 14:24); private peace-offerings, only after they had been slain; while in public peace-offerings, the practice varied.

Sacrifices Slain by Priests Only

Under ordinary circumstances all public sacrifices, and also always that of the leper, were slain by the priests (The Hebrew term used for sacrificial slaying is never applied to the ordinary killing of animals). The Talmud declares the offering of birds, so as to secure the blood, to have been the most difficult of a priest's work. For the death of the sacrifice was only a means towards an end, that end being the shedding and sprinkling of the blood, by which the atonement was really made. The Rabbis mention a variety of rules observed by the priest who caught up the blood - all designed to make the best provision for its proper sprinkling. Thus the priest was to catch up the blood in a silver vessel pointed at the bottom, so that it could not be put down, and to keep it constantly stirred, to preserve the fluidity of the blood. In the sacrifice of the red heifer, however, the priest caught the blood directly in his left hand, and sprinkled it with his right towards the Holy Place: while in that of the leper one of the two priests received the blood in the vessel; the other in his hand, from which he anointed the purified leper (Leviticus 4:25).

The Application of the Blood

According to the difference of sacrifices, the blood was differently applied, and in different places. In all the burnt-, trespass-, and peace-offerings the blood was thrown directly out of the vessel or vessels in which it had been caught, the priest going first to one corner of the altar and then to the other, and throwing it in the form of the Greek letter F, so that each time two sides of the altar were covered. Any blood left after these two 'gifts,' as they were called (which stood for four), was poured out at the base of the altar, whence it flowed into the Kedron. In all sin-offerings the blood was not thrown, but sprinkled, the priest dipping the fore-finger of his right hand into the blood, and then sprinkling it from his finger by a motion of the thumb. According to the importance of the sin-offering, the blood was so applied either to the four horns of the altar of burnt-offering, or else it was brought into the Holy Place itself, and sprinkled first seven times towards the veil of the Most Holy Place (Leviticus 4:6,17), and then on the four horns of the golden altar of incense, beginning at the north-east. Finally, on the Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled within the Most Holy Place itself. From all sin-offerings the blood of which was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering certain portions were to be eaten, while those whose blood was brought into the Holy Place itself were wholly burnt. But in the sacrifices of firstlings, of tithes of animals, and of the Paschal lamb, the blood was neither thrown nor sprinkled, and only poured out at the base of the altar.

The Flaying

On the shedding of blood, which was of the greatest importance - since, according to the Talmud, "whenever the blood touches the altar the offerer is atoned for" - followed the 'flaying' of the sacrifice and the 'cutting up into his pieces.' All this had to be done in an orderly manner, and according to certain rules, the apostles adopting the sacrificial term when he speaks of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The 'inwards' and 'legs' having been washed (Leviticus 1:9), and dried with sponges, the separate pieces of the sacrifice were brought up by various priests: the calculation of the Rabbis being, that in the case of a sheep or a she-goat six priests carried the sacrifice, one more the meat- and another the drink-offering (in all eight); while in that of a ram twelve, and in that of a bullock four-and-twenty priests were needed for the service. Next, the sacrificial salt was applied, and then the pieces were first confusedly thrown and then arranged upon the fire. (Whatever was laid upon the altar was regarded as 'sanctified' by it, and could not again be removed, even though it should have become defiled. This explains the words of Christ in Matthew 23:19). This latter part of the service requires explanation.

The Burning

The common idea that the burning either of part or the whole of the sacrifice pointed to its destruction, and symbolised the wrath of God and the punishment due to sin, does not seem to accord with the statements of Scripture. The term used is not that commonly employed for burning, but means 'causing to smoke,' and the rite symbolises partly the entire surrender of the sacrifice, but chiefly its acceptance on the part of God. Thus the sacrifice consumed by fire which had originally come down from God Himself - not by strange fire - would ascend "for a sweet savour unto the Lord" (Leviticus 1:9; 4:31). Even the circumstance that the fire for the altar of incense was always taken from that on the altar of burnt-offering, shows that, while that fire might symbolise the presence of a holy Jehovah in His house, it could not refer to the fire of wrath or of punishment. As already stated, those parts of the sin-, trespass-, and public peace-offerings, which were allowed to be eaten, could only be partaken of by the priests (not their families) during their actual ministry, and within the Temple walls. The flesh of these offerings had also to be eaten on the day of the sacrifice, or in the night following; while in other offerings the permission extended to a second day. The Rabbis, however, restrict the eating of the Paschal lamb to midnight. Whatever was left beyond the lawful time had to be burned.

New Testament View of Sacrifice agrees with the Synagogue

It is deeply interesting to know that the New Testament view of sacrifices is entirely in accordance with that of the ancient Synagogue. At the threshold we here meet the principle: "There is no atonement except by blood." In accordance with this we quote the following from Jewish interpreters. Rashi says, 'The soul of every creature is bound up in its blood; therefore I gave it to atone for the soul of man - that one soul should come and atone for the other.' Similarly Aben Ezra writes: 'One soul is a substitute for the other.' And Moses ben Nachmann: 'I gave the soul of you on the altar, that the soul of the animal should be an atonement for the soul of the man.' These quotations might be almost indefinitely multiplied. Another phase of Scriptural truth appears in such Rabbinical statements as that by the imposition of hands: 'The offerer, as it were, puts away his sins from himself, and transfers them upon the living animal;' and that, 'as often as any one sins with his soul, whether from haste or malice, he puts away his sin from himself, and places it upon the head of his sacrifice, and it is an atonement for him.' Hence, also, the principle laid down by Abarbanel, that, 'after the prayer of confession (connected with the imposition of hands) the sins of the children of Israel lay on the sacrifice (of the Day of Atonement).' This, according to Maimonides, explains why every one who had anything to do with the sacrifice of the red heifer or the goat on the Day of Atonement, or similar offerings, was rendered unclean; since these animals were regarded as actually sin-bearing. In fact, according to Rabbinical expression, the sin-bearing animal is on that ground expressly designated as something to be rejected and abominable. The Christian reader will here be reminded of the Scriptural statement: "For He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

There is yet one other phase on which the Synagogue lays stress. It is best expressed in the following quotation, to which many similar might be added: "Properly speaking, the blood of the sinner should have been shed, and his body burned, as those of the sacrifices. But the Holy One - blessed be He! - accepted our sacrifice from us as redemption and atonement. Behold the full grace which Jehovah - blessed be He! - has shown to man! In His compassion and in the fullness of His grace He accepted the soul of the animal instead of his soul, that through it there might be an atonement.' Hence also the principle, so important as an answer to the question. Whether the Israelites of old had understood the meaning of sacrifice? 'He that brought a sacrifice required to come to the knowledge that that sacrifice was his redemption.'

Jewish Liturgies

In view of all this, the deep-felt want so often expressed by the Synagogue is most touching. In the liturgy for the Day of Atonement we read: 'While the altar and the sanctuary were still in their places, we were atoned for by the goats, designated by lot. But now for our guilt, if Jehovah be pleased to destroy us. He takes from our hand neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice.' We add only one more out of many similar passages in the Jewish prayer-book: 'We have spoken violence and rebellion; we have walked in a way that is not right... Behold, our transgressions have increased upon us; they press upon us like a burden; they have gone over our heads; we have forsaken Thy commandments which are excellent. And wherewith shall

we appear before Thee, the mighty God, to atone for our transgression, and to put away our trespasses, and to remove sin, and to magnify Thy grace? Sacrifice and offerings are no more; sin- and trespass-offerings have ceased; the blood of sacrifices is no longer sprinkled; destroyed is Thy holy house, and fallen the gates of Thy sanctuary; Thy holy city lies desolate; Thou hast slain, sent from Thy presence; they have gone, driven forth from before Thy face, the priests who brought Thy sacrifices!’ Accordingly, also, the petition frequently recurs: ‘Raise up for us a right Intercessor (that it may be true), I have found a ransom (an atonement, or covering).’ And on the Day of Atonement, as in substance frequently on other occasions, they pray: ‘Bring us back in jubilee to Zion, Thy city, and in joy as of old to Jerusalem, the house of Thy holiness! Then shall we bring before Thy face the sacrifices that are due.’

The Eve of Day of Atonement

Who shall make answer to this deep lament of exiled Judah? Where shall a ransom be found to take the place of their sacrifices? In their despair some appeal to the merits of the fathers or of the pious; others to their own or to Israel’s sufferings, or to death, which is regarded as the last expiation. But the most melancholy exhibition, perhaps, is that of an attempted sacrifice by each pious Israelite on the eve of the Day of Atonement. Taking for males a white cock (because the Hebrew word for ‘man’ is used in the Talmud for ‘a cock’ and ‘white,’ with reference to Isaiah 1:18), and for females a hen, the head of the house prays: ‘The children of men who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in misery and iron - them will He bring forth from darkness and the shadow of death, and break their bonds asunder. Fools, because of their transgressions and because of their iniquities, are afflicted; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, that He save them out of their distresses. He sends His word and heals them, and delivers them from their destruction. Then they praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His marvellous works to the children of men. If there be an angel with Him, and intercessor, one among a thousand, to show unto men His righteousness, then He is gracious unto him, and saith. Let him go, that he may not go down into the pit; I have found an atonement (a covering).’ Next, the head of the house swings the sacrifice round his head, saying, ‘This is my substitute; this is on exchange for me; this is my atonement. This cock goes into death, but may I enter into a long and happy life, and into peace!’ Then he repeats this prayer three times, and lays his hands on the sacrifice, which is now slain.

This offering up of an animal not sanctioned by the law, in a place, in a manner and by hands not authorised by God, is it not a terrible phantom of Israel’s dark and dreary night? and does it not seem strangely to remind us of that other terrible night, when the threefold crowing of a cock awakened Peter to the fact of his denial of “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”?

And still the cry of the Synagogue comes to us through these many centuries of past unbelief and ignorance: ‘Let one innocent come and make atonement for the guilty!’ To which no other response can ever be made than that of the apostle; “Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26).

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“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word,
it is because, there is no light in them.”
- Isaiah 8:20.