

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 153

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Editorial

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

In recent months I have become increasingly aware that one of the major stumbling blocks preventing a clear understanding of the Atonement is the commonly held belief that Jesus Christ was a Priest. This has again come to the fore in the article on Ezekiel’s Temple by Brother H.C.Gates which commences in this Circular Letter.

The view that Jesus Christ was a Priest during His mortal life has far reaching consequences and those holding it feel obliged to say (as does H.C.Gates) that as the high priests under the law offered for themselves even so must Jesus Christ also have offered for Himself, whereas, of course, Jesus Christ was not the Priest but the Sacrificial Offering, the Lamb of God. It is the belief that Jesus Christ was in some way both Priest and Sacrifice which is the cause of much confusion and one would search in vain for such an anti-type. (Indeed one would be forced into the absurd position of looking for two anti-types – a Passover lamb that offered for itself and a high priest who gave himself to be the sacrifice).

Let us keep the fact clearly in our minds that Jesus Christ was not a Priest until He had “an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16) and it will avoid our being side-tracked into needless argument and I make no apology for reiterating this matter in a comment following the article on Ezekiel’s Temple.

The Atonement which Jesus Christ achieved for us by His Sacrifice was the greatest act of love this world has ever known so let us appreciate to the best of our ability all that He has done for us for it is by Him and through Him we have the opportunity of eternal life. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).

My Sincere Love to all, your brother in the Master’s service, Russell Gregory

THOUGHTS ON THE DAILY READINGS for MARCH & APRIL

This time of the year takes us through the Book of Numbers. There we read about how God led the children of Israel through the wilderness. We read about the cloud that pointed the way by day and the fire by night. What I want to draw our attention to is the fact that God was the Captain; He led the people in the most visible manner. It was evident to everybody, from the youngest to the oldest that God dwelt among them and guided them.

When the cloud was taken up they journeyed following the cloud. When it rested, so did the Israelites. Come to think of it, their lives were under God's control more closely and more directly than ours today. Their daily activities were under the eyes of God and controlled by Him in much more detail than our every day lives, and yet, don't let us forget, God watches over us just the same, and if we let Him, controls our lives just the same; howbeit not quite in the same noticeable manner.

There were detailed instructions of what to do when the cloud was taken up; how the tabernacle was to be taken down, which of the Levites did which task the sequence in which the camp was to set forward, etc., etc.

Of course much of it applied to the time of the journeying of the Israelites. Some of the instructions are repeated later in the Book of Deuteronomy, but there emphasis is laid on the time when they came to be settled in their own land.

Today there is no open vision. This will only come again at the Lord's return. We have the Word of God as recorded for us in the Bible as our guide. The law has fulfilled its task as the schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. No longer are we tied to a set of rules governing our everyday actions, but it does not follow that we are free to do as we like. Free from the Old Testament ordinances, yes, but free to do as we like? No. We are under the law of Christ as laid down for us in the New Testament and our actions are to be governed by this law, not as rigorous and detailed as the Mosaic Law, but nevertheless binding.

Another thing that comes to mind is the regularity with which the manna fell on the ground. Every day in the morning, - twice the quantity on the sixth day, none on the Sabbath. The manna perished when kept longer than one day, except the double portion of the sixth day which lasted for two days. Let the atheist and unbeliever who sneer at the miracles, trying to present them as mere natural happenings, explain this regularity. And let them also explain the tenth plague, the dying of the firstborn. Some say that it was an epidemic. Could be, but how did it strike just the firstborn and nobody else? Let them explain this.

Coming back to the regularity of the manna, there are certain events in our lives where we rely on their regular occurrence. Those who are working expect their wages on a fixed day of the week. Those who are retired their pension on a certain day of the week. It usually arrives, but due to human error it can and does fail at times. And have we not all been wondering at times whether our salary, or pension, will have come through? Compare this with the unfailing regularity of the manna, or for that matter, of day and night, and the seasons.

And so we are once more brought to appreciate the reliability of God, and more, His infallibility. His plan with the earth will not fail. We do not know when Christ will return, whether during our life or not; but we have the assurance that it will happen. God will keep His promise to raise us if we are worthy to the end. Any promise breaking is on our part, not necessarily deliberately but more likely through slackness and negligence. So let us afresh renew our resolution to follow our Lord to the end of our probation or until He come, whichever the sooner.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

From your letters

Brother Arthur Speed writes: “Thank you for the C.L., also for the two copies of “The Work of God in Christ.” Please send further copies... the booklet is excellent. Indeed the importance of the Atonement cannot be overestimated.

It is interesting to read about the Jewish sect at Qumran and the Essenes – the Apostle Paul knew about this sect and was concerned about their teaching over the atonement. Among other views they believed that the Messiah could only come through the priesthood - the family of Aaron.

The Apostle Paul had to correct this erroneous teaching as it led to questions particularly between the priests through the Old Covenant and that of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant - Melchizedec - the new order. Indeed the Levitical priest did offer sacrifice for the people and for himself.

The flock in Christ, the Hebrews, were unable to understand the need for a change in the Law or in the priesthood. The Apostle went to great pains to explain why this was so.

Indeed Jesus being a High Priest of the New Covenant gave Himself for us; “Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” He was (is) The Atonement. The Jewish high priest was a sinful man... He needed an expiatory sacrifice for his own sins as they (the people) did for theirs. As the priesthood was imperfect so necessarily his sacrifice had to be imperfect

This was not the case of Jesus. He was so holy that He needed no sacrifice for Himself. Jesus made such Atonement that it should not be repeated. Thus He put an end to sacrifices, for when He made the Great Atonement it was complete and there is no need that any other blood should be shed for human guilt.”

Sister Evelyn Linggood writes; “Many thanks for the C.L. and the two booklets... your father’s article was always a favourite of ours as he puts it all simply.

Esleigh Feltham seems a hard nut to crack... I know we were only too pleased to hear the truth about the Atonement and resurrection questions; it all made such sense to us when it was explained, but it seems some Christadelphians don’t want to hear and say they are quite satisfied with what they have.

No, it does not seem very likely that God would cause the serpent to speak in order to tempt Eve when evil thoughts come from within, as we are told by James and Jesus, and we know it of our own selves, don’t we.

I have been reading Elpis Israel again lately and have been struck by how thickly Dr Thomas lays on sinful flesh and sin-in-the-flesh, it seems to be the “be all and end all” with him, doesn’t it? I often marvel that we could be so taken in by their view of the Atonement, as you say we never finish learning...

Please convey our love to all the brethren and sisters.”

Brother Phil Parry writes: “Our thanks to you once again for the C/Letter which we hope will be of interest and benefit to its readers but hope that the constructive criticism re myself and Sis. Evelyn will not have the negative effect and imply that we are not in unity and fellowship on the most important basis - this being the Atonement.

I would not say dogmatically that in His preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus put His sacrificial death in the forefront and in plain words to those other than His disciples.

Most of His preaching was in parables and no doubt there were many who perceived their meaning as pointing to His death yet could not comprehend why the Messiah should be put to death. Even Daniel’s record speaks of Messiah being cut off at a certain appointed time and at that time John the Baptist proclaimed Him as the Lamb of God and exhorted them to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight, instead of hindering by putting stumbling blocks in His way. Of course, most of those who boasted in the Law by works and not by faith, thought the animal sacrifices were efficacious unto life, and could not

perceive that they were only types of the real substance promised from Eden, and demonstrated by faith in men like Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." If this were fact, then was He not preaching His death as the antitype to fulfil the types and the promises made to the fathers? We appreciate, of course, that the mission of John and of Jesus was at that time to the Jews, and John's baptism signified repentance, not death into that of Christ as with the Gentiles since that event. The Jews in general could not visualize a people of God apart from themselves, and this was the great mystery hid through the ages apart from individuals of faith, like Abraham of whom Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Abraham saw the promises, though afar off, fulfilled in Christ the promised Seed. (Hebrews 11:13). Under the blessings of Jacob we have a mention of Joseph in Genesis 49:24 where the Mighty God of Jacob is spoken of and in brackets, "from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel." There is a reference to this in Psalm 80 and asking for salvation and a visit from God. "Let thine hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." See also Isaiah 28:16.

Jesus stated to the Jews that He was the Good Shepherd and that the Good Shepherd would lay down His life for the sheep. That His sheep heard His voice and followed Him. He even told those that sought a sign from Him that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, as Jonah was in the whales belly. Surely this should have signified to them His own death and resurrection? But it is obvious that Jesus preached of His atoning work to the Jews, John 10, irrespective of whether they understood it, which if they knew and understood the Scriptures would have jolted their memories, as we find in John 12-31-41.

The teaching of Jesus to Nicodemus involved the Atonement, John 3:14-17, but the matter of their understanding was another matter referred to by Jesus, in John 9:39. Is it not similar in our day? We are preaching the doctrine of the Atonement now, but how many understand and believe it? If all that Jesus said were printed, we are told the world could not contain the books, so I can only accept that Sis. Evelyn could be correct through the limitation of what is written and that Paul's Gospel placed more emphasis on Jesus and Him crucified than the Gospel Jesus preached to the Jews would have done."

Brother Leo Dreifuss writes: "I read with great interest what you had to say in your letter to Esleigh about the Trinity. You could have saved yourself a lot of heartache if you had a copy of "The History of the Doctrine of the Trinity." (A copy follows after the letters). It is what I copied from the book "Christadelphian Answers," pages 3 and 4. We must admit that the Christadelphians are right in some things. We have, after all, learned quite a lot from them. Let us give credit where credit is due. So anyone who has read this won't look into the Bible for proof, simply because it does not teach it. You mention it to any Jew and he will laugh. If words mean anything at all, one verse from Deuteronomy is enough, "The Lord our God is one."

Fred Lea once talked to a minister about the Trinity and he really lost his temper when Fred contradicted him. He preached from the pulpit "he cannot be saved who does not believe in the holy trinity, but will suffer eternal hell fire." We can thank God that He has opened our understanding to something better.

I was interested about what you had to say about the serpent in Eden. I keep an open mind on this. True, if there was a serpent speaking, it looks as though God originated the big lie "thou shall not surely die." But let us admit we don't understand everything. And if every time we don't, we say, well this is not literal, and that is not symbolic, where do we stand? It will finish with everybody making his own Bible.

Now the case of Balaam's ass is different. The ass spoke. We are told plainly in Numbers 22:28, "And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass..." So the ass spoke. What it said was of course what the angel made it speak. So it was God speaking through the ass. But Balaam heard the animal's voice. It must have put great fear into Balaam, but nothing is said about this. Balaam seems to have been so furious that he never realized this extraordinary phenomenon.

Phil pointed out an error in my "Remarks on The Daily Readings for January" C.L. 152, Jan/Feb 1995, page 6, last paragraph, 1st line, "The seed of man..." should read "The seed of woman..."

Sister Audrey Bundy writes: "I enjoyed Bro. Phil's article but would like to query one point he made regarding the thief on the Cross. As we know there was no comma in the original (Luke 23:43) and by putting it in a different place, or by changing it around it alters the meaning. Phil's version states the thief would be with Christ in paradise. So what is Phil's version of paradise?"

If one puts the comma after "today" then it becomes a question and asks the thief "Shalt thou be with me in paradise?" To many paradise is Heaven or the Kingdom, but the meaning of paradise in the Diaglott states it is not Greek but of Asiatic origin and means "a garden" or "vineyard."

If we believe that the thief would be in the Kingdom then we have to believe in death-bed repentance. In which case we could do whatever we liked just so long as we repented at the last. This is something I cannot accept. I don't know exactly what Phil's thoughts are on the subject so maybe you would find out. According to what he says it would seem that he does believe the thief would be saved."

Brother Harold Dawson writes: "Thank you for another interesting C.L. and the pamphlets. I have already distributed these. The format of the C.L. is greatly enhanced by the word processor... Thank you for all you do... I enclose a shortish exhortation which I hope you will find acceptable for inclusion in the C.L...."

Again Bro. Phil writes: "If I am correct, I think you are in the process of reproducing most of our literature regarded as worthwhile, so that we can make request for whatever we require to read or send out."

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In response to some of the points in your letters; firstly I would like to thank Brother Harold for his exhortation. I should also say thank you to Brother Leo for all of his too, but it is pleasing to receive a contribution from others, so will readers please note - all contributions of articles are gratefully received. Also I'm pleased you like the new format of the C.L. It is a great help to me as it is so much easier and quicker than an ordinary typewriter and it will do so much more too.

Secondly, Yes Phil, I have started to reproduce Nazarene Fellowship literature on the word processor. So far I have typed out about twenty titles but of these some have yet to be proof read and then suitably set out for making up suitable for booklet form before photocopying, and then of course the booklets have to be made up, all of which takes time but I hope to be able to send out one or two titles with every future C.L. and perhaps additional titles in between the C.L.s. Perhaps readers would let me know which titles they would like me to give priority to.

Russell.

My thanks also to Brother Leo for the following extract:

History of The Trinity

The growth of the blasphemous doctrine of the triune God, is briefly but plainly set forth in the following facts:

A.D.

- 29 Jesus said, "The Lord our God is one Lord." - Mark 12:29.
- 57 Paul said, "To us there is but one God." - 1 Corinthians 8:6.
- 96 Clement said, "Christ was sent by God."
- 120 "Apostle's Creed" - "I believe in God the Father."
- 150 Justin Martyr introduces Greek Philosophy.
- 170 The word "Trias" appears first in Christian literature,
- 200 "Trinitas" is first introduced by Tertulian.
- 230 Origen opposes prayers to Christ.
- 260 Sabellius; "Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three names for the same God."
- 300 Trinitarian prayers unknown in the Church.
- 325 "Nicene Creed" affirms Christ to be "Very God of Very God."

- 370 Doxology composed.
- 381 Council of Constantinople invents "Three persons in One God,"
- 383 Emperor Theodosius threatens punishment to all who won't worship the Trinity.
- 519 Doxology ordered to be sung in all the Churches.
- 669 Clergy commanded to commit to memory the "Athenasian Creed."
- 826 Bishop Basil required the clergy to repeat the "Athenasian Creed" every Sunday.

Extract from "Christadelphian Answers."

Again there is further correspondence from Esleigh Feltham, who writes:

Dear Brother Russell, Thank you for your letter of the 10th January. Sorry for this late reply.

(1) Page 3, para.1: In your previous letter of November 28th, pages 1,2 you say Adam forfeited his natural life by disobedience. You now say "his sin was a barrier to eternal life" which is obviously true. You therefore testify my previous assertion that Christ could not have risen from the dead if He was paying the penalty imposed on Adam.

(2) The basic doctrine you support is the product of an immature mind unable to perceive the nature and root of the problem. In effect it portrays God as a Creditor pressing an insolvent debtor, and quite content if the debt is settled from whatever source.

(3) God required from man a recognition (on his own terms) that mankind (in Adam) had been justly condemned to death for sin (i.e. confession); and acknowledging God's way by appropriate conduct thereafter (i.e. repentance). This could only be done by One having our (Adam's) nature (Hebrews 2:14,17; Romans 1:3; 8:3) but personally uncompromised by sin, publicly laying down His life to acknowledge that the sentence was justified. In other words, a recognition of God's righteousness was the basis of forgiveness (Romans 1:17; 3:25,26; 4:36).

(4) Your own reference to Romans is pointless, Adam, with the nature God gave him, was condemned, and Christ had that nature; therefore our quote (your page 3 at top) was simple truth. Bible references to the nature we have are seldom complimentary (Romans 7:18-24 etc.). Any change in man's body since creation is due to misuse thereof or disease, reducing his length of life to one tenth of antediluvian life-span.

(5) In pondering this subject, one should bear in mind the remarkable case of Enoch, a descendant of Adam, who "walked with God" and was exempted from death.

(6) 1 Corinthians 15:42; our booklet page 2, is partly relevant. There will of course be many responsible living (good and bad) when Christ returns. My own view is that those living and those resurrected will be "raised to divine nature together." It does not seem appropriate that divine nature should ascend out of the grave.

(7) Your conclusion re the pre-existence of Christ is only reached by ignoring all the evidence which I feel compelled to recognize. Indisputably God still has complete control over all His creation, mortal or otherwise. Philippians 2:6-8 seems to be relevant to Christ. Since you choose to ignore all the evidence on above, your assertion that I do not reason from the Scriptures is very cynical, as well as untrue, but no doubt it will go down well with your readers!

(8) Muth Temuth. The apparent implication of most of the passages referred to cannot nullify the basic meaning : Dying thou shalt die.

Sincerely your brother in the hope of Christ's early return. Esleigh Feltham.

To the above I replied:

Dear Brother Esleigh, Thank you for your letter of the 11th February,

I have numbered the paragraphs of your letter for ease of reference. I want to deal with your second paragraph first of all:-

(2) Any doctrine which portrays God as a creditor pressing an insolvent debtor, and quite content if the debt is settled from whatever source has to be the product of an immature mind unable to perceive the nature and root of the problem. However, nothing I have written could lead you to suppose I held such a doctrine. Indeed nothing you have ever read of the teachings of the Nazarene Fellowship could have led you to suppose that any one of us held such a doctrine, and what is far more important there is no such doctrine taught in the Scriptures. The only source from which you could draw such a view and so make your accusation is by listening to what others say about us either through ignorance or malice. It is a matter of great sadness to us all that so many who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ still spread such lies about us in their ignorance of what we believe and teach; but where it is through malice we rejoice in persecution for His Name's sake knowing our reward is great.

It is the "Sinful flesh" mongers who make out that man cannot keep the commandments and thereby cannot avoid being sinners and are then punished for their sins who portray God as a Creditor pressing an insolvent debtor.

But God is ever and always the Provider for man's needs. The title "Almighty" (Shaddai) would be well rendered "All Providing" for indeed our Heavenly Father is never the Creditor demanding what we cannot pay but the Giver to meet our every need. Jesus Christ showed us we ought and can be perfect.

(1) With regard to your first point - there is no "therefore" about it. Indeed Adam forfeited his natural life by disobedience and his sin was the barrier to eternal life. Neither Adam nor anyone who receives his life through Adam can receive the reward for sin and receive the reward for not sinning. (Who ever heard of anyone receiving a prize for winning and losing? or for coming first and last?). In other words, had Adam received the wages of sin he could not then expect also to receive the reward of eternal life for obedience. That Jesus Christ accepted the inflicted death due to Adam and in his place did not prevent Him receiving the reward for perfect obedience. His reward was Eternal Life, Spirit Life, having given up His natural life in sacrifice for us. These facts show it is a fallacy to say that Jesus could not have risen from the dead if He died in Adam's stead.

(3) You write: "God required from man a recognition (on His own terms) that mankind (in Adam) had been justly condemned to death for sin (i.e., confession); and acknowledging God's way by appropriate conduct thereafter (i.e., repentance). This could only be done by One having our (Adam's) nature (Hebrews 2:14,17; Romans 1:3 & 8:3) but personally uncompromised by sin, publicly laying down His life to acknowledge that the sentence was justified."

For Jesus to lay down His life in this manner merely to acknowledge that the sentence was justified implies that God was in collusion with Jesus' murderers; it also robs Jesus of the efficacy of His Sacrifice. To say that Jesus Christ had to justify God's condemnation of sin by making Him of flesh full of sin so that He can cruelly destroy that flesh by crucifixion in order to show what such flesh deserves portrays God as worse than a Creditor demanding payment from an insolvent debtor.

You go on to say: "In other words, a recognition of God's righteousness was the basis of forgiveness" (Romans 1:17; 3:25,26; 4:16).

Obviously God is righteous and no right minded person would deny it, but is that sufficient basis for forgiveness? More than this is required. A recognition of God's righteousness is not sufficient basis for forgiveness to eternal life. Forgiveness on this basis alone can do no more for us than it did for the people of Nineveh who, recognising God's righteousness, repented of their unrighteousness at the preaching of Jonah. This forgiveness did not give them eternal life. What is necessary is that we acknowledge that Jesus Christ laid down His life voluntarily as the Ransom price to purchase us and in this He did for us what we could not do for ourselves, i.e., receive the wages of sin and still receive the reward for not sinning. It is necessary that we be "in Him" through baptism in order that His righteousness can be imputed to us. In baptism we die

unto sin in symbol as He did in reality. We are baptised into His death - the death He died in our place. Hereby we come out of Adam and into Christ. Only after baptism can forgiveness be efficacious to eternal life.

Jesus Christ gave Himself for the sin of the world and in acknowledging this, those “in Christ” can go to Him and confess and repent of their sins, knowing that they will be forgiven; herein recognising the great love, compassion and mercy of God and of His Son.

(4) While you refuse to acknowledge the difference in the meaning between sinful flesh, i.e. flesh full of sin as a physical attribute, and sin’s flesh, i.e. flesh as meaning mankind being owned by and serving another lord and not God, then my reference to Romans 8:3 is indeed pointless.

Regarding Romans 7:18-14 etc., I am surprised to find a person with your experience of the Scriptures using these verses in this way. Since I was a young man I have appreciated that Paul was here talking of his position before his conversion and is speaking of his standpoint as a Jew under the law reasoning from the point of view of one who trusted in his descent from Abraham and his observance of the law. Over the years I have known of other young people who supposed the literal understanding of these verses as applying to them throughout this life (which is natural enough until it is pointed out to be a mistake) only to be put right by various members of the Christadelphian ecclesia with which I was closely associated until the age of 58.

It is necessary to take Paul’s message in context. Chapter 7 opens with Paul’s comparison of the binding law of marriage with the binding law of sin and death. Once one partner of a marriage dies the other is free to be bound to another, and once we are dead to sin we are free to be bound to the law of the Spirit of life. Paul then goes on to discourse on his prior state as a Jew trusting in his descent and his observance of the law (and this includes verses 18-24 which you refer to) and then from verse 25 and on into chapter 8 he thanks God for the way out of his bondage to sin through Jesus Christ.

Dr Adam Clarke has this to say regarding the verses you quote and so misapply:

“It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that the Apostle speaks here (Romans 7) of his regenerative state, and that what was, in such a state, true to himself, must be true of all others in the same state. This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and -disgraced its character. It requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of this Epistle, to see that the Apostle is here either personating a Jew, under the Law and without the Gospel, or showing what his own state was... while without Christ.”

Where Bible references are uncomplimentary to “the nature we have” you will find they always refer to character and never to flesh.

It is only in a legal or ceremonial sense can flesh be considered as being unclean. Throughout this discourse it is evident Paul is not speaking of literal flesh but is using the term flesh metaphorically. As in Romans 7:5; “when ye were in the flesh” - when they were obviously still very much flesh. Again in Romans 8:9; “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.” Again they were still physically, literally flesh. So that when Paul says in Romans 8:8, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” he is inferring that they that are in the spirit can please God, while in the two previous verses he says that “to be carnally minded is death and to be spiritually minded is life” it is quite obvious how he is using his metaphor. (Jesus had previously told us that “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.”)

We are not cursed by any kind of physical depravity which drives us to sin; such an idea is nothing more than a superstition.

You write: “Any change in man’s body since creation is due to misuse thereof or disease, reducing his length of life to one tenth of antediluvian life-span.”

A complete and utter falsehood! There is no evidence whatsoever of any change at any time in man’s physical make-up since Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden. There is no evidence of any change in the physical make-up of Adam and Eve when they were turned out of the Garden and there is no evidence of

any change in man's physical make-up during the 6000 years since. Up to the time of the Flood man's life span was greater than we experience today but it was God who altered that, not man. After the Flood He reduced man's life span to much the same as we know it today. 2 Timothy 3:1-9 prophesied that mankind would become excessively depraved "in the last days" as we see all around us in these "perilous times," so we should expect man's life span to shorten, but what do we find? For over one hundred years now, throughout the world, man's life expectancy has continued to increase, not shorten.

(5) What a remarkable thing this is that Enoch with 'sinful flesh' (as you believe) could be taken by God and not see death and yet Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, was required to acknowledge His Father's righteousness by being cruelly murdered because His Father had given Him the same 'sinful' flesh! Ugh!

I see the fact that Enoch was "translated that he should not see death," as a type of the Elect who are to be taken before the judgment of the nations.

(6) It may not seem appropriate to you that the dead should rise out of the grave immortal but Paul says in direct answer to a direct question that the dead are raised immortal, and I fail to see what better construction we can put, on it. To the clean all things are clean and the grave is where Almighty God has chosen to let His people sleep until the resurrection.

(7) Regarding Philippians 2:6-8 - when taken out of context one could use this to support an argument for the pre-existence of Christ but it is obvious Paul had no such thought in view when discoursing about lowliness; putting others before self, that nothing should be done through strife or vainglory; that we should be like Jesus Christ, who though heir of all things yet gave His life a ransom for many so that the many might have life. This is an exhortation to be like Him, and show that "new commandment" which He left us, "that ye love one another even as I have loved you." This was a new commandment because it went further than the two commandments recorded in Matthew 22:37-39: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This greater love Jesus Christ showed when He went to the Cross for others, not Himself. In this He did more than keep the first two commandments. We should show such love, whether it be by turning the other cheek or going that extra mile, and generally doing more for others than for self, as He did. These are all attributes of His character - attributes we should cultivate to be like Him.

But these verses do not teach the pre-existence of Christ - one has to have that idea first and then use these verses as support. What a lot of nonsense doctrines have been invented in this way!

(8) Muth Temuth. If you are able to show and reason from Scripture one single reference where the words, "dying thou shalt die," indicate natural death and not inflicted death then I shall be delighted to blaze the news around the world in the pages of the Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter!! It will be a Headline First!!

But Esleigh, unless you are able to do this for all to see then, I'm sorry, but I see no point in continuing our correspondence. I have done my best to convince you of a better understanding of the Love of God in the Atonement and I beg of you to wash and be clean of this defiled flesh doctrine. It is dishonouring to our Creator and robs our Lord Jesus Christ of His Sacrificial work, His honour and His glory. It makes His crucifixion a martyrdom and not a sacrifice.

Jesus offered Himself as the Sacrifice and sacrifice necessarily means substitution. Just as in buying, when one exchanges money for goods - this is substitution; and we were bought with the precious blood of Christ. Matthew 20:28 "Even as the Son of man came... to give his life a ransom for (Greek 'anti,' 'in place of) many." As in "an eye for ('anti' - 'in place of) an eye," etc. See Young's Concordance for others. You cannot do without substitution.

You refer to Romans 8:3:- "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh (i.e. like the flesh in Sin's power, subject to death) and for a sacrifice for sin, (i.e. To buy back from Sin's power and release His friends from death) condemned sin while in the flesh (which in His case did not belong to Sin)"

You may not like the way I have quoted this verse but you will find it very hard to find fault with it. Keeping the law could not save us because we are not able to provide a redemption price to buy ourselves back from sin's possession. So God sent Jesus Christ, with a life direct from Him, a life not sold to sin, as the redemption price to die in Adam's place who sold himself and us. There are two Federal Heads; Adam and Jesus Christ. We must leave the one and go to the other. No man can serve two masters.

"For as much then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." 1 Peter 4:1

I remain Yours Sincerely in the service of God and His Son, Russell Gregory.

DANIEL

In this exhortation we shall not deal with Daniel's prophecies. Much has been written and argued about them and probably not fully understood until the Lord's return. But I think the time has come to consider Daniel as a person, and more, as a man of God.

Three times Daniel has been addressed as a man greatly beloved (Daniel 9:23; 10:11; 10:19) For this reason a little of our time should be well spent in considering what made him so beloved, and to see what we can learn.

The first thing that comes to mind is that he was a man of prayer and acknowledged God in all things. One of his tasks was the interpretation of three dreams to two different rulers. And on all occasions he made it abundantly clear that it was not he, by his own power and wisdom, but God who gave the interpretation.

His first task was especially difficult; He had not only to interpret a dream, but tell the king what the dream was. The king's astrologers and soothsayers must have had some elementary knowledge of God. They realized the existence of higher power as the only source of such wisdom (Daniel 2:11). But how did Daniel deal with the situation? He and his three companions first prayed to God. And after God revealed to him the dream with the interpretation he thanked God. And let us ask ourselves, do we always thank God after a prayer is answered? Then when he went before the king he first of all acknowledged God as the Giver of ail revelations (Daniel 2:27,28) "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

Then follows the well known dream of the great image, and its interpretation. Later, he had another dream to interpret for Nebuchadnezzar, when he became high minded and failed to acknowledge God. His greatness went to his head and he lost his reason for a while.

And his last dream to Belshazzar to interpret the writing on the wall, a phrase which has since become part of our language. On all these occasion he never failed to reveal the source of all wisdom.

Another trait in his character was that the high office which he held under several successive rulers never went to his head, unlike in the case of Nebuchadnezzar who lost his reason over it. But Daniel never got too big for his boots, something which statesmen of our day could well take an example from. In this respect he resembled Samuel, another highly devoted prophet, who never sought gain or advantage for his own benefit. The office which Daniel held was probably equivalent to that of prime minister.

Daniel was a man of prayer, and of supreme trust if God. This he had to demonstrate when Darius, at the instigation of some jealous troublemakers, threw him in the den of lions. It goes to his credit that he kept on praying openly, regardless of the consequences. It put Darius into a nasty quandary. He knew that some jealous trouble makers were the cause of it. Darius also showed some faith in God, for he said to Daniel (Daniel 6:16) "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." But His faith did not go quite far enough to stand up to the trouble makers; be firm and have the courage to say "No." The fear of making a fool of himself and to be deposed from the throne was the cause of his weakness; a case similar to that of

Pilate some five centuries later, who did not really want to crucify our Lord, but lacked courage to stand up to the Pharisees. And how glad Darius must have been when Daniel came out unharmed, and his trust in God vindicated. This event must have taught Darius a lesson which he remembered for the rest of his life.

Another example of Daniel as a man of prayer. We read in chapter 9, verse 20, that he had a personal sin to confess. We are not told what that sin was, but sometimes I wonder whether God, in His wisdom had a purpose in allowing the fact that Daniel had a sin to confess to be recorded. Was there perhaps the danger that successive generations might look on Daniel as a sort of semi-god? To this day many revere people who pretend to receive messages from the supernatural. More so in ancient times when people had great faith in astrologers, crystal gazers and such like. There were plenty of them at Daniel's time, as we gather from references to them in the book under consideration. And from the point of view of his and subsequent generations, the record of Daniel having sinned might have brought him down to earth a little in man's estimation.

And then the final divine message, the last verse in the Book of Daniel "For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." What an assurance, what a comfort for ageing Daniel, to know he met with God's approval. And how simple to understand after the many complicated prophecies which Daniel himself sometimes had difficulty to understand. If ever anyone could fall asleep with a peace of mind, Daniel (and later Paul) was one of them.

And what of our position? We have the same assurance in the Scriptures if we do our part and hold fast to the end. But we all must admit that in our daily lives we have a long way to go before we come up to Daniel and other worthies of old. We need God's mercy to forgive us our faults. But we have our High Priest in heaven through whom we can draw nigh to God with a humble spirit of repentance. Daniel lived before Christ's ministry. He was unable to bring the animal sacrifices pointing forward to Christ, as the temple was destroyed and he was in captivity with his fellow countrymen. So he is one of those to whom faith was counted for righteousness

We who live in these last days are just about beginning to see prophecy fulfilled, and perhaps soon shall witness events prophesied by Daniel, but not fully understood by him. What a prospect for us to see such events unfold! So let us take Daniel's life as an example and let us also take to heart what not to do from the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar who took too much credit to himself, and from Darius who did not have the will power to refuse to throw Daniel to the lions. And in these days of lack of interest in Divine matters, let us not be afraid to dare to be a Daniel when necessary and to stand alone.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

A Collection of the Evidence For and Against the Traditional Wording of The Baptismal Phrase in Matthew 28:19

FORWARD

The importance of this subject is shown in the last chapter of this article.

In more than fifty years as a student of the Bible, and an enquirer in the sphere of Biblical knowledge, I have not seen or heard of anything dealing with this question of the authenticity of the text of Matthew 28:19, apart from articles and letters in periodicals and books, now out of print, and encyclopaedias.

This collection is concerned with the actual text of Scripture, and not with any teaching arising as a result (though the aspect of teaching will of necessity arise when we consider the internal evidence as to the genuineness of the text). Teaching is based on the text of Scripture: this Collection of Evidence is concerned with the text.

The Compiler. 1st January 1962

INTRODUCTION

“Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5) Therefore spurious scripture is vile.

David wrote: “Through Thy precepts I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way.” (Psalm 119:104).

Note the force of the word “therefore.” If, as David, we love God’s Word, we shall, as he, hate spurious scripture. (See also Jeremiah 15:19; Exodus 22:26; 44:23).

Many have had difficulty concerning the phraseology of Matthew 28:19, and have written to editors of periodicals. Most of the editors wrapped up the difficulty with words, phrases, ideas, expositions and exhortations, all of which are good in their proper place, but not as wrapping to hide away the difficulty.

A glowing exception to the general rule was that of Dr Thomas. A letter from J. R. Lithgow on this subject and dated 28th May 1855, (published in “The Herald.” October 1855) remained unanswered for a long time. We do well not to rush for the first possible explanation.

It is now known, and without the slightest uncertainty, that the verses 1 John 5:7-8 in the Authorised Version contain spurious scripture- “Until the middle of the nineteenth century the text of the three witnesses 1 John 5:7-8 shared with Matthew 28:19 the onerous task of furnishing Scriptural evidence of the Trinity-.,(the spurious words)... are now abandoned by all authorities except the Pope of Rome. By consequence the entire weight of proving the Trinity has of late come to rest on Matthew 28:19.” - F.C. Conybeare.

But is the Name-phrase in Matthew 28:19 likewise spurious, or is it genuine? Let the reader judge after examining the evidence.

ON TEXTUAL CRITICISM GENERALLY

The evidence here presented will be of four kinds:- (1) MSS. (2) Versions. (3) Quotations. (4) Internal Evidence.

Most Bible Helps contain a brief description of the methods of Textual Criticism. For example, Swete, in the “Aids to the Student” in the Variorum Bible, says:- “The text of the New Testament rests upon the combined testimony of streams of documentary evidence - extant Mss. of the Greek original, ancient versions, and ‘patristic’ quotations, i.e. passages cited by a succession of ancient Christian writers known as The Fathers.”

And concerning the MSS:- “The autographs of the New Testament Scriptures were probably lost within a few years after they were written. No early Christian writer appeals to them as still existing... men... could not anticipate their importance to posterity.”

And concerning the Versions: “Next in importance to MSS. as channels for the transmission of the text of the Greek Testament, must be placed the ancient Versions, which were made from Greek manuscripts, in most cases older than any which we now possess. The Old Latin and Syriac Versions belong to the second century, and carry us back to the lifetime of some of the immediate successors of the Apostles.”

And concerning the patristic writings:- “So extensive are the quotations of the New Testament in the Greek and Latin Christian writers of the first five centuries that it would have been possible, in the event of all the MSS. of the Canon having perished, to recover nearly the whole of the text from this source alone...there remains a large number of instances in which patristic authority goes far to turn the scale in favour of a disputed reading, or against it.”

As to Matthew 28:19, the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics says:- “It is the central piece of evidence for the traditional view... If it were undisputed, this would, of course, be decisive, but its trustworthiness is impugned on the grounds of textual criticism, literary criticism and historical criticism.

(The presence of the word for “baptising” in- Matthew 28:19 is also disputed, but we are not now concerned with this point: many other passages uphold the truth concerning Baptism.)

Whether or not the Name-phrase of Matthew 28:19 is genuine or spurious can be decided only by the evidence of the MSS., of the Versions, of the Patristic Writings, and by what is styled ‘Internal Evidence.’

Let us therefore consider the evidence of the MSS.

EVIDENCE OF THE MSS.

For the Threefold Name:- The two earliest MSS extant (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), written in the 4th century, both include the threefold name. All the later Mss that include the end of Matthew also contain the threefold name.

“In all extant MSS.... the text is found in the traditional form.”

- Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.

Against the threefold Name:- There is no evidence in the MSS.

BUT - it must be remembered that we have no manuscript that was written in the first, or in the second, or in the third century. There is a gap of three whole centuries between the writing of Matthew and the earliest of our MSS.

It must also be remembered that no single MS. is free from textual error. Some have errors peculiar to themselves, and some whole families of MSS. have the same errors. The textual critic aims to reproduce from an examination of all the evidence what was probably the original words.

But from the facts stated, it is within possibility that all the existing MSS. may have one or more textual errors in common. That fact must be admitted, however reluctantly.

Another fact that we have to face is that during that time gap of three hundred years false teaching thrived and developed into the Great Apostacy. Moreover; “The Greek MSS. of the text of the New Testament were often altered by scribes, who put into them the readings which were familiar to them, and which they held to be the right readings.” - Dr C.R.Gregory, one of the greatest textual critics. But this aspect is dealt with in a later chapter.

Another writer has this to say:- “A great step forward is taken when we propose to allow MSS. weight, not according to their age, but according to the age of the text which they contain. To Tregelles must be ascribed the honour of introducing this method of procedure, which he appropriately called Comparative Criticism. It is a truly scientific method, and leads us for the first time to safe results... But a little consideration will satisfy us that as an engine of criticism, this method is far from perfect. It will furnish us with a text that is demonstrably ancient, and this, as a step towards the true text, is a very important gain. It is something to reach a text that is certainly older than the fourth century - that was current in the third or the second century. But this can be assumed to be the autographic text only if we can demonstrate that the text current in the second or third century was an absolutely pure text. So far from this, however, there is reason to believe that the very grossest errors that have ever deformed the text had entered it already in the second century... If our touchstone only reveals to us texts that are ancient, we cannot hope to obtain for our result anything but an ancient text. What we wish, however, is not merely an ancient but the true text.”

Of course, when he speaks of “grossest errors” the writer is not speaking of errors of teaching, but, as a textual critic, of errors in the text itself. The subject of the corruption of the text of scripture concurrently with the corruption of teaching in the apostate churches is dealt, with in a later chapter.

Before reaching any decision, let the reader consider the evidence of the Versions, as some of them are earlier than any of the MSS. But first let us see what happened to the ancient MSS.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EARLIEST MSS?

Why have we no copies of the Scriptures written earlier than the 5th Century (except for two which were written in the 4th Century)?

The following quotations will supply the answer:- “Diocletian... in 303 A.D... ordered all the sacred books to be burnt... but enough survived to transmit the text.” – Swete in *Variorum Aids*.”

“One reason why no early MSS have been discovered is that they were, when found, burned by the persecutors of the Christians. Eusebius writes: I saw with mine own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down and razed to their foundations, and the inspired and sacred Scriptures consigned to the fire in the open market place.” - H.E.viii 2.

Among such scenes he could not fail to learn what books men held to be more precious than their lives.” Dr Wescott: *General Survey of the History of the Canon of the N.T.* Page 383.

It would seem that the library at Caesarea had been severely damaged:- “About A.D. 350 two priests, Acacius and Euzoius, undertook the task of restoring the damaged library of Pamphilus at Caesarea, and replaced the old papyrus books with vellum copies.” Jerome Ep. xxxiv. - *The Principal Uncial MSS. of the N.T.* (Hatch).

EVIDENCE OF THE VERSIONS

For The Threefold Name:- All the extant versions which contain the end of Matthew contain the Threefold Name. But “In all extant... versions the text is found in the traditional form... though it must be remembered that the best manuscripts, both of the African Old Latin and of the Old Syriac versions are defective at this point.” - *Ency. Rel. and Ethics*.

Again:- “In the only codices which would be even likely to preserve an older reading, namely the Siniatic Syriac and the oldest Latin Manuscript... the pages are gone which contained the end of Matthew.” - F.C.Conybeare.

So that we have no MS. earlier than the 4th Century, and in the case of these two earlier versions the end page of Matthew has been destroyed!

In these circumstances we must turn to the early quotations, styled the “Patristic Writings” and examine their evidence to see how they quoted Matthew 28:19, and this we will proceed to do.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE EARLY WRITERS

“In the course of my reading I have been able to substantiate these doubts of the authenticity of the text Matthew 28:19 by adducing patristic evidence against it, so weighty that in future the most conservative of divines will shrink from resting on it any dogmatic fabric at all, while the more enlightened will discard it as completely as they have its fellow-text of the Three Witnesses.” - F.C.Conybeare in *Hibbert Journal*.

How true is this? What are the facts? While no MS, of the first three centuries is in existence, we do have the writings of at least two men who did actually possess, or had access to MSS. much earlier than our earliest. And there were others who quoted the passage of Matthew 28:19 in those earlier times.

Who were these men? When did they write? Had they access to very early MSS? Were they reliable and exact? How did they quote Matthew 28:19? These are questions that must now be answered.

It is proposed to bring forward evidence from the following, either by direct quotation from their writings, or indirectly through the writings of their contemporaries, viz., Eusebius of Caesarea, the unknown author of *De Rebaptisemate*, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Justyn Martyr, Mecedonius, Eunomius and Aphraates.

But first a clarification - Let it be stated emphatically, that if the question under consideration were one of theology, the evidence of these "Fathers" would be of no value whatever. Our doctrine must be obtained from the pure word of God alone, and not from any other source. These so-called "Fathers" lived in an age of theological darkness, and when we have the light of Scripture it is folly to search among the dim candle-lit darkness of the theologians. Our concern is to find out what Matthew wrote at the end of his book.

Before dealing with the other writers, let us examine Eusebius as to his integrity and reliability as a witness, seeing that in this enquiry he is a key witness.

EUSEBIUS AS A WITNESS

There were several men of this name. The one with whom we are concerned is known as Eusebius Pamphili, or Eusebius of Caesarea-- He was born about 270 A.D. and died about 340 A.D. He lived in times of gross spiritual darkness, was a Trinitarian, and in later life assisted in the preparation of the Nicene Creed. Here follows the opinions of historians and others concerning him.

Robert Roberts: "Eusebius of Caesarea, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of so many contemporary works of antiquity, many of which must have perished had not he collected and edited them." - Good Company, vol.3, page 10.

E.K. in The Christadelphian Monatshefte. Aug 1923: "Eusebius, the greatest Greek teacher of the Church and most learned theologian of his time... worked untiringly for the acceptance of the pure word of the New Testament as it came from the Apostles... Eusebius... relies throughout only upon ancient manuscripts, and always openly confesses the truth when he cannot find sufficient testimony." - Fraternal Visitor, June, 1924.

Mosheim: "Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, a man of vast reading and erudition, and one who has acquired immortal fame by his labours in ecclesiastical history, and in other branches of theological learning... Till about 40 years of age he lived in great intimacy with the martyr Pamphilus, a learned and devout man of Caesarea, and founder of an extensive library there, from which Eusebius derived his vast stores of learning." - Editorial; footnote-

Dr Westcott: "Eusebius to whose zeal we owe most of what is known of the history of the New Testament."- Survey of the History of the Canon of the N.T.page 10.

Peake: "The most important writer in the first quarter of the fourth century was Eusebius of Caesarea... Eusebius was a man of little originality or independent judgment. But he was widely read in the Greek Christian literature of the second and third centuries, the bulk of which has now irretrievably perished, and subsequent ages owe a deep debt to his honest, if somewhat confused, and at times not a little prejudiced, erudition." - Bible Commentary, page 596.

Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature: "Some hundred works, several of them very lengthy, are either directly cited or referred to as read (by Eusebius). In many instances he would read an entire treatise for the sake of one or two historical notices, and must have searched many others without finding anything to serve his purpose... Under the second head the most vital question is the sincerity of Eusebius.

Did he tamper with his materials or not? The sarcasm of Gibbon (Decline and Fall, c-xvi) is well known... The passages to which Gibbon refers do not bear out his imputation... Eusebius contents himself with condemning these sins... in general terms, without entering into details... but it leaves no imputation on his honesty."

Mosheim, in an Editorial note: "Eusebius was an impartial historian, and had access to the best helps for composing a correct history which his age afforded."

Conybeare: "Of the patristic witnesses to the text of the New Testament as it stood in the Greek MSS. from about 300-340 A.D., none is so important as Eusebius of Caesarea, for he lived in the greatest Christian Library of that age, that namely which Origen and Pamphilus had collected. It is no exaggeration to say that from this single collection of manuscripts at Caesarea derives the larger part of the surviving ante-Nicene

literature. In his Library, Eusebius must have habitually handled codices of the gospels older by two hundred years than the earliest of the great uncials that we have now in our libraries. - Hibbert Journal, October 1902.

So much for the honesty, ability and opportunity of Eusebius as a witness to the text of the New Testament. Now we are ready to consider his evidence on the text of Matthew 28:19.

THE EVIDENCE OF EUSEBIUS

Having introduced the first witness, it is time to ascertain what he wrote concerning the text of Matthew 28:19.

According to the Editor of the *Christadelphian Monatshefte*, Eusebius among his many other writings compiled a collection of the corrupted texts of the Holy Scriptures, and "the most serious of all the falsifications denounced by him, is without doubt the traditional reading of Matthew 28:19."

Persistent enquiry has failed to trace the compilation referred to, and Knupfer, the Editor, has left his last Canadian address without trace. But various authorities mention a work entitled "Discrepancies In The Gospels" or "Questions And Solutions On Some Points In The Gospel History" and another work on "The Concluding Sections Of The Gospels."

According to Conybeare: "Eusebius cites this text (Matthew 28:19) again and again in works written between 300 and 336, namely in his long commentaries on the Psalms, on Isaiah, his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, his *Theophany*... in his famous history of the Church, and in his panegyric of the emperor Constantine. I have, after a moderate search in these works of Eusebius, found eighteen citations of Matthew 28:19, and always in the following form:

'Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I commanded you.'

I have collected all these passages except one which is in a catena published by Mat in a German Magazine, the *Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, edited by Dr Erwin Preuschen in Darmstadt in 1901. And Eusebius is not content merely to cite the verse in this form, but he more than once comments on it in such a way as to show how much he set store by the words 'in my name.' Thus, in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* he writes thus (col. 240, p. 136):

'For He did not enjoin them "to make disciples of all the nations" simply and without qualification, but with the essential addition "in His name." For so great was the virtue attaching to His appellation that the Apostle says, God bestowed on him the name above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth. It was right therefore that He should emphasise the virtue of the power residing in His name but hidden from the many, and therefore say to His Apostles, "Go ye, and make disciples of all the nations in my name."

Conybeare proceeds (in Hibbert Journal, 1902): "It is evident that this was the text found by Eusebius in the very ancient codices collected fifty to a hundred and fifty years before his birth by his great predecessors. Of any other form of text he had never heard and knew nothing until he had visited Constantinople and attended the Council of Nice. Then in two controversial works written in his extreme old age, and entitled, the one, "Against Marcellus of Ancyra," the other "About the Theology of the Church." He used the common reading. One other writing of his also contains it, namely a letter written after the Council of Nice was over, to his see of Caesarea."

In his *Textual Criticism Of The New Testament* Conybeare writes: "It is clear, therefore, that of the MSS. which Eusebius inherited from his predecessor, Pamphilus, at Caesarea in Palestine, some at least preserved the original reading, in which there was no mention either of Baptism or of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It had been conjectured by Dr Davidson, Dr Martineau, by the Dean of Westminster, and by Prof-Harnack (to mention but a few names out of many) that here the received text could not contain the very words of Jesus - this long before anyone except Dr Burgon, who kept the discovery to himself, had noticed the Eusebian form of reading."

An objection was raised by Dr Chase, Bishop of Ely, “who argues that Eusebius found the *Textus Receptus* (traditional text) in his manuscripts, but substituted the shorter formula in his works for fear of vulgarising and divulging the sacred Trinitarian formula. It is interesting to find a modern Bishop reviving the very argument used 150 years before, in support of the forged text of 1 John 5 - “Bengel... allowed that the words (the Three Witnesses) were in no genuine MS... Surely, then, the verse is spurious! No: this learned man finds a way of escape- The passage was of so sublime and mysterious a nature that the secret discipline of the Church withdrew it from the public books, till it was gradually lost. Under what a want of evidence must a critic labour who resorts to such an argument!” - Person (Preface to his Letters).

Conybeare continues, refuting the argument of the Bishop of Ely: “It is sufficient answer to point out that Eusebius’s argument, when he cites the text, involves the text ‘in my name.’ For, he asks, ‘in whose name?’ and answers that it was the name spoken of by Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians 2:10.”

The Ency. Ret. and Ethics states: “The facts are, in summary, that Eusebius quotes Matthew 28:19 twentyone times, either omitting everything between ‘nations’ and ‘teaching,’ or in the form ‘make disciples of all nations in my name,’ the latter form being the more frequent.”

Now let us look at the other early writers who quoted Matthew 28:19.

EVIDENCE OF OTHER EARLY WRITERS

Author of *De Rebaptismate*: “The anonymous author of *De Rebaptismate* in the third century so understood them, and dwells at length on ‘the power of the name of Jesus invoked upon a man by Baptism.’” - *De Rebaptismate* 6.7. - Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol.1, p.352.

Origen; “In Origen’s works, as preserved in Greek, the first part of the verse is thrice adduced, but his citation always stops short at the words ‘the nations;’ and that in itself suggests that his text has been censored, and the words which followed, ‘in my name,’ struck out.” - Conybeare.

Clement of Alexandria: “In the pages of Clement of Alexandria a text somewhat similar to Matthew 28:19 is once cited - but as from a gnostic heretic, named Theodotus, and not as from the canonical text. as follows - And to the apostles he gives the command: Going around preach ye and baptise those who believe in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit-’ (Excerpt cap. 76, ed. Sylb- p.287)” - Conybeare.

Justyn Martyr; “Justyn... quotes a saying of Christ... as a proof of the necessity of regeneration, but falls back upon the use of Isaiah and apostolic tradition to justify the practice of baptism and the use of the triune formula. This certainly suggests that Justyn did not know the traditional text of Matthew 28:19” - Ency. Pel. And Ethics.

And on the other hand - “In Justyn Martyr, who wrote between A.D. 130 and 140, there is a passage which has been regarded as a citation or echo of Matthew 28:19 by various scholars, e.g. Resch in his *Ausser canonische Parallelstellen*, who sees in it an abridgment of the ordinary text. The passage is in Justyn’s dialogue with Trypho 39, p.258;- “God hath not yet afflicted, nor inflicts the judgment, as knowing of some that still even to-day are being made disciples in the name of His Christ, and are abandoning the path of error, who also do receive gifts each as they be worthy, being illumined by the name of this Christ.”

The objection hitherto to these words being recognised as a citation of our text was that they ignored the formula ‘baptising them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit,’ but the discovery of the Eusebian form of text removes this difficulty; and Justyn is seen to have had the same text as early as the year 140, which Eusebius regularly found in his manuscripts from 300 to 340” - Conybeare (*Hibbert Journal*).

Macedonius: “We may infer that the text was not quite fixed when Tertullian was writing, early in the third century. In the middle of that century Cyprian could insist on the use of the triple formula as essential in the baptism even of the orthodox. The pope Stephen answered him that the baptisms even of heretics were valid, if the name of Jesus alone was invoked. (However, this decision did not prevent the popes of the seventh century from excommunicating the entire Celtic Church for its adhesion to the old use of invoking

the one name). In the last half of the fourth century, the text 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' was used as a battle-cry by the orthodox against the adherents of Macedonius, who were called 'Pneumatomachi' or fighters against the Holy Spirit, because they declined to include the Spirit in a Trinity of persons as co-equal, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father and Son. They also stoutly denied that any text in the New Testament authorised such a co-ordination of the Spirit with the Father and Son. Whence we infer that their texts agreed with that of Eusebius." - Conybeare (Hibbert Journal).

Eunomius: "Exceptions are found which perhaps point to an old practice dying out. Cyprian (Ep. 73) and the Apostolic Canons (No- 50) combat the shorter formula, thereby attesting its use in certain quarters. The ordinance of Canon Apost. 50 runs - 'If any bishop or presbyter fulfil not three baptisms of one initiation, but one baptism which is given (as) into the death of the Lord. let him be deposed.' This was the formula of the followers of Eunomius (Socr, 5,24) - 'for they baptise not into the Trinity, but into the death of Christ.' They accordingly used single immersion only." - Ency. Biblica (Art. Baptism),

Aphraates: "There is one other witness whose testimony we must consider. He is Aphraates... who wrote between 337 and 345. He cites our text in a formal manner as follows: 'Make disciples of all nations, and they shall believe in me.' The last words appear to be a gloss on the Eusebian reading 'in my name.' But in any case, they preclude the *textus receptus* with its injunction to baptise in the triune name. Were the writing of Aphraates an isolated fact, we might regard it as a loose citation, but in the presence of the Eusebian and Justinian texts this is impossible." - Conybeare.

In the next Circular Letter the Compiler will be considering:

"How Biblical MSS. were altered when the Great Apostasy began."

EXHORTATION

Dear Brethren and Sisters, may the following thoughts be of help and encouragement to us all.

When we read through the Gospels, we have to be in admiration of the sheer strength of character of Jesus - His perception of people, events, and things that are said by Him and His reaction to the things said to Him, and of course, the high degree of common sense that Jesus showed particularly in His dealings with the Jewish leaders who hated Him, seeing Him as they did as a threat to their own authority before the ordinary people.

Jesus was of course a very popular man - especially with regard to the healing He brought to many, and the Jewish leaders were deeply Jealous of His power. Jesus received at His baptism the gift of the Holy Spirit which descended upon Him like a dove, John the Baptist protested at his own unworthiness to do it, and we remember the reply Jesus made to John - "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." What humility from One born of the Holy Spirit and who knew without doubt who He was and what was His mission.

Indeed Jesus knew His mission from only 12 years, when as a child He rebuked His concerned parents in the Temple, who found Him in conversation and debate with the Elders, who were amazed at His knowledge of the Judaic Law; "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Oh yes, Jesus knew He was the Messiah of Israel and that it was going to be His duty, through His recognition of the fact and ministry of 3½ years, a symbolic period of time and of course, to be the perfect sin-offering that the Law required for the forgiveness of sins. This is why later on Jesus made the declaration, "For the Son of man (God's Son channelled through the human race) came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." How galling it must have been to Jesus to be argued against by ignorant bombastic people who were in His eyes a contradiction of sinners against Himself. But such was His love, and His prayer (to come later), "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," really applied throughout the 3½ year period of His ministry.

We are reminded, perhaps of the warning of Jesus to those who would believe on Him in the generations to come, now a time span of some 2000 years; "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Have you experienced tribulation? I think to some degree or other we all have. But whatever our personal experience has been it is absolutely as nothing compared to what Jesus went through for us. In His death through crucifixion, the Roman method of execution, which was unspeakably cruel and agonising, especially beneath the hot mid-day sun until late afternoon was a dreadful prolonged way to die. But Jesus underwent this for you and me.

Earlier, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus gave them the prayer we know so well; and He, knowing human weakness as well our strengths, advised us to ask God for deliverance from evil, for to God belongs the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory which was and is for ever and ever. We are therefore not alone, we can ask God to help us in our day by day living so that as our days are so shall our strength be.

We know of course that we cannot blame our natures for the shortcomings of our characters. It is not sin just to exist, sin is to break God's Law and that Law is the 10 commandments as given to Israel through Moses. It is in our power to keep this Law, but in a lifetime, be it long or short, we do fall short - as Jesus knew we would. He in His death paid the price of our failures. He it was who was the ideal Keeper of God's law (the 10 Commandments) and because He was the Son of God and not of the sons of Adam, He was legally free of the condemnation Adam's disobedience brought upon the human race.

It was as the Son of Mary that He kept the Law perfectly though had He chosen to He could have broken that law, but He indeed kept it perfectly, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" this verse underlines the legal difference between Jesus and us. A vital difference. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." A positive statement of fact. God's redemptive plan through Jesus Christ is so utterly beautiful; and greater love hath no man than that a man should lay down His life for His friends. Yes, Jesus paid our debt, having no debts of His own.

Let us therefore never forget that it is by Grace we are saved. At best we have little righteousness of our own. We have nothing to boast about and not by works either, but by Grace of God. We have a responsibility of course to do the best we can, and we can be perfect, knowing and believing these things. We can ask for help in prayer and to be protected and delivered from evil.

We are not ever really alone.

Brother Harold Dawson.

EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

This is the first of 7 Lectures on Ezekiel's Temple given by H.C.Gates in 1963.

Part One.

The Ezekiel Temple Services and Priesthood Essentially Levitical and Aaronic.

"As at the First."

Examination of the prophecy of Ezekiel relating to the Temple services and the priesthood of the Age to come reveal that: they are a re-instatement of the provisions of the Law of Moses which were suspended forty years after the crucifixion of Christ.

It is evident not only from Ezekiel but from other prophets that those provisions are to be restored as part of the general restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. Isaiah says, "I will restore thy judges as at the first,

and thy counsellors as at the beginning” (Isaiah 1:26). This is representative of a number of passages which show the expectation of the prophets. But the idea is not confined to the Old Testament. We have Peter speaking of the “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21), and Jesus referring to the “regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory” (Matthew 19:28).

These references make it clear that the Kingdom of Israel is to be restored and the phrase “restitution of all things” implies that all the things which were prominent features of the kingdom of God in the past are to come into existence again. One would thus expect that Kingship, Priesthood, Sacrifices, Feasts etc., would be restored “as at the first.”

God’s Covenant with Levi.

We begin by referring to God’s ancient covenant with Levi.

In Numbers 8 we have the separation of Levi from the rest of the tribes (see also Numbers 3 & 4) in order to do service in and about the Tabernacle: -

“Thus shall thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be mine... For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel” (verses 14-18).

This describes the original choosing and taking of the tribe of Levi to be God’s ministers. This choice is carried forward to the future as Jeremiah declares:-

“For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually... If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers” (Jeremiah 33:17-21. Compare Exodus 40:15).

This declares not only the perpetuity of David’s throne but also the perpetuity of God’s covenant with Levi, that they should be God’s priests and ministers. This covenant will be fulfilled although Levi in the past corrupted God’s way. As Malachi declares:-

“For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7-8).

How then is the covenant to be fulfilled if Levi corrupted the covenant? Should not Levi be cast off? Malachi answers this problem thus:

“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:2,3).

The tribe of Levi, then, are to be purged and purified and then to be re-instated as God’s priests and ministers.

Two Orders of Priests in the Past.

Now there were two orders of priests in the past - a lower and a higher – the lower consisted of the members of the tribe of Levi generally, whilst the higher were of the family of Aaron only. Numbers 18 provides the details:

“And the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father’s house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: But thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness. And they (the Levites) shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die. And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation for all the services of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you. And ye (sons of Aaron) shall keep the charge of the sanctuary and the charge of the altar: that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel... Therefore thou and thy sons shall keep your priest’s office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil...” (Numbers 18:1-7).

It will be seen that the two orders of priests had their duties defined and regulated. The lower order had the charge of the tabernacle generally, but were not to come nigh the altar; whilst the higher order (Aaron and his sons) were to keep the charge of the altar.

This charge of the altar involved the actual offering of the sacrifices and of eating those parts of the offerings which were appropriate. (See also Exodus 28,29,40 and Leviticus 1-6 for duties of sons of Aaron).

“This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it: every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee” (Numbers 18:9,10).

The “most holy place” referred to, where the eating had to take place was actually the court of the tabernacle as can be seen by reference to Leviticus 6:16.

Two Orders of Priests in the Future

Now when we come to Ezekiel’s prophecy we find exactly the same arrangement of two orders of priesthood with the higher order only having access to the altar and of eating the appropriate parts of the offerings;

“This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadoc among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him.” (Ezekiel 40:45,46).

We notice the similarity of language with that of Numbers 18 - the lower order are “keepers of the charge of the house” and the higher order are “keepers of the charge of the altar.” Moreover they are all Levites, with the family of Zadoc (a descendant of Aaron) occupying the higher office.

These arrangements are amplified in Ezekiel 44 where two orders are distinctly indicated and their respective duties outlined. The higher orders are said to “come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood” (verse 15) and, as with the arrangements in Numbers 18 the higher order eat of the most holy things, “They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering^ and every dedicated tiling in Israel shall be theirs.” (Ezekiel 44:29).

This is confirmed by reference to chapter 42 verse 13;

“The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the Lord shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering; for the place is holy,”

The lower order are not allowed to “come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place,” (44:13), (R.V. “unto the things that are most holy”), therefore it is the higher order, the sons of Zadoc, who lay the offerings in these holy chambers and eat them.

Thus we see that in regard to the priesthood in the temple of the future there is to be a resumption of the two orders with similar duties and responsibilities “as at the first.”

The Temple Services - Past and Future.

The Temple services of the future again bear a marked similarity to the arrangements under the Law of Moses. Starting with the consecration of the altar and the sons of Zadoc as detailed in Ezekiel 43:18-27 and comparing this with Leviticus 8 we see a week of services which involve sin offerings of bullocks, rams and goats and an anointing of the altar and its four horns with the blood of the offerings. On the eighth day the consecration is finished and the priests take over. Their offerings on behalf of the people are then accepted.

Similarly there are daily, weekly and monthly services as before, involving sin offerings, meat offerings, and peace offerings (Ezekiel 45:17 and 46:4-15) Also two great feasts are to be kept, namely the Passover and Tabernacles. Unleavened bread is to be eaten during the seven days of the Passover as before and there are to be burnt offerings and sin offerings prepared by the prince on behalf of himself and the people of the land.

There is one great difference. No day of Atonement is mentioned.

Clearly then, Ezekiel’s Temple service and priesthood is Levitical and Aaronic. The Aaronic section of the priesthood, however, becomes narrowed down to the sons of Zadoc. Whilst at the first it was the whole family of Aaron which occupied the higher order, it was narrowed down to Eleazer and Ithamar upon the defection of Nadab and Abihu; it is yet again narrowed down to the family of Zadoc of the house of Eleazer. A Shadow and Not the Substance

It is clear then that the whole arrangement in the future, as it was before, is a shadow, not the substance- The Passover is still a type of Christ; Tabernacles still a type of the final harvest; the sin offering still a type of the offering of Jesus. And it could be said of the offerings in the future, as in the past, “the blood of bulls and. Of goats can never take away sins.” It is a time of re-formation as Hebrews 9:10 declares; “Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

This does not mean that the ordinances spoken of would cease but that they would be reformed or amended, as is clear from the references we have made from the prophets. And as such the amended Law is still a pattern of things in the heavens, it is still a shadow, but the body is of Christ.

It might reasonably be asked, “If the offerings of the past could never take away sins, then why restore them; surely they are useless?” No, they are not useless. They were not useless before and whether performed before the One great offering of Jesus, or after, makes no difference to their usefulness and purpose. The object is just the same, namely to teach the people that they are in need of reconciliation; they are sinners and are in need of the shedding of blood to cover their sins. The death of the animals will teach them as it did in the past, that they as mortal sons of Adam, are justly condemned to death; and also that God’s way to life is through the blood shedding of one of their own race. The burning of the animal on the altar will also pre-figure the life consumed in the Lord’s service, as it did of old.

Thus the offerings are just as effective and just as non-effective as they were before. They cannot take away sins, but they can teach the people that they are in need of forgiveness. There is no difference in the meaning of the sacrifices although they are performed after the one sacrifice of Jesus for sins for ever.

Part Two,

The Sons of Zadoc Not Immortal

In our first part we have shown that in the temple of the future there are two orders of priests; the lower who have the charge of the house, and the higher who have the charge of the altar. This arrangement was shown to be the same as obtained under the law.

It is believed by many that the higher order - the sons of Zadoc as they are called - are an immortal priesthood, whilst the lower are mortal. But what proof is there of this contention? There is no proof at all. We have already shown that the two orders are exactly the same as under the law and that there was no question then of one order being immortal and the other mortal. And if the higher order, though mortal, had the charge of the altar and the most holy things, what reason is there for contending that in the future the same class of priests will be immortal? There is no reason, but quite the contrary. The fact that two mortal orders were in operation before is circumstantial evidence that it will be the same in the future, especially when it is remembered that the offerings and sacrifices are the same. There is no need for immortal priests to offer blood offerings, and moreover, it would be unfitting, as we shall show.

The Sons of Zadoc Alone Come Near

Now the essential difference between the two orders, as indicated by Ezekiel, is that the sons of Zadoc “come near to me... to offer unto me the fat and the blood,” (44:15). They have the “charge of the altar... and from among the sons of Levi come near to the Lord to minister unto him” (40:46). These verses distinctly state the functions of the sons of Zadoc. The lower order (i.e. the rest of the sons of Levi) are just as distinctly described as being those who are not allowed to “come near,” “nor to come near to any of my holy things” (44:13).

Moreover, we have seen (from Numbers 18, etc.) that this coming “near to the holy things” involves, on the part of the higher order, the eating of those appropriate parts of the sacrifices. Thus we read;

“The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the Lord (i.e. “come near”) shall eat the most holy things, and the meat offering and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place is holy” (Ezekiel! 42:13).

We have also seen that under the Law of Moses this function of eating the sin offering etc., was performed by the higher order. It is therefore the sons of Zadoc who “come near,” “approach unto the Lord” and who eat the sin offering and the trespass offering, etc.

Now let us take notice of the fact that in Ezekiel 44:29 we read these words;

“They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs.”

Who are these who did this eating? There can only be one answer - the sons of Zadoc. Yet this verse comes in the section of chapter 44 which deals with the priests who can sweat, marry, become defiled, etc. The sons of Zadoc are obviously mortal men and we cannot understand where in the Word the idea of their immortality came from.

The Sons of Zadoc Leave their Clothes in the Holy Chambers

Further more, in chapter 42 following upon the verse which speaks of the priests eating the sin offerings, etc., (v. 13), and which we have shown refers to the sons of Zadoc, we have in the next verse;

“When the priests enter therein (that is, the holy chambers where they eat the offerings) then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.”

These priests we repeat, are the sons of Zadoc, Yet we have a precisely similar verse in chapter 44 which reads thus;

“And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments.”

This verse immediately follows that verse which speaks of garments causing sweat. The conclusion again is that since it is the sons of Zadoc who use these chambers for leaving their garments it is the sons of Zadoc who have to guard against anything that causes sweat,

There is further evidence in verse 17 of the same chapter; “And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gate of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.”

The word “within” or “in the house” (R.V.) implies a coming near to the Lord; it is an approach to the innermost part, to the most holy place (which is not always the holy of holies), which is forbidden to the lower order. The conclusion again is that this section of chapter 44 is speaking of the sons of Zadoc. We have noted the necessity of the changing of garments on the part of those priests who come near to the Lord. They have to lay their garments, wherein they have ministered, in the holy chambers before they go into the outer court to the people. Why is this? It is because those garments have acquired a holiness by contact with the holy things and by contact with the altar (“whatsoever toucheth the altar is holy”). It is necessary that these garments be changed lest a ceremonial holiness be conveyed to the people in the outer court- Who are those who approach unto the altar and to the holy things? The sons of Zadoc. Therefore it is the sons of Zadoc who are spoken of in verse 19 of chapter 44; the Levites’ garments do not acquire this holiness because they do not come near to the holy things.

So then the latter part of chapter 44 from verse 15 onwards is speaking of the sons of Zadoc and since these verses contemplate the possibility of sweating, marrying, being defiled, etc., the conclusion is inescapable that the sons of Zadoc are mortal men.

Unfitting for Immortals to Offer Animal Sacrifice

But quite apart from these logical deductions we wish now to show that the principles of God require the higher order of Levitical priests in the age to come to be mortal. This raises the question from one of mere interest to one of great importance.

The principle is this, that it is impossible for an immortal to represent mortals in the matter of priesthood involving animal sacrifices. The offering of an animal argues the sameness of nature on the part of the offerer. Otherwise the offering is of no significance.

We have shown there were two orders of priests under the Law, and that it was part of the higher order not only to make the actual offering upon the altar but also to eat it. Now this eating declares a close association with sin:

“This is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the Lord: it is most holy. The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Leviticus 6:25,26).

The meaning of this eating is shown in a later chapter when after the failure of Nadab and Abihu, Moses was angry with Eleazer and Ithamar for failing to eat the sin offering:

“Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:17).

This verse is most important for it shows that the eating was all part of the means for covering of sins. In doing this the priests were bearing the iniquity of the congregation. They were to sit down in the court of the tabernacle and solemnly eat of the offering. There could be no closer association with sin and its removal than this operation. It implies digesting, assimilating, thoroughly considering sin.

Now the Apostle writing to the Hebrews makes it clear that it was necessary for the priests to have the same nature as the people and to offer not only for the people but also for themselves. There was thus a complete equality with the people and an association with them in the matter of sins and the removal of sins. Thus we read;

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins” (Hebrews 5:1-3).

It was necessary therefore that the priest should be one of the people, of exactly the same nature, in order to represent them in the matter of offerings. Following this principle we, as Christadelphians, insist that it was necessary for Jesus to be of our nature to represent us, to bear our iniquities and to take away our sins. As the letter to the Hebrews further tells us;

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

There can be no escape from this principle. The priest must be of the same nature as the people, and he must offer for himself as well as for them. If, in the future age, we say that immortal priests can offer for the people and represent them in this matter of sacrifices, we nullify this principle and take the ground away from our proof that Jesus had to be of our nature.

We therefore have no hesitation in saying that the contention that the sons of Zadoc are immortal is in direct opposition to the principles of God. We have shown there is no ground for this view in the details given by Ezekiel but rather the reverse, and have now shown that the principles of the bearing of sins do not permit such a view to be entertained.

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Editor’s note: We do not agree with all we publish. The above series is being published at the request of some of our readers. It was written by H.C.Gates when a Christadelphian, believing the sinful flesh heresy. We see how at almost the end of this article, he “proves” Jesus Christ must have had sinful flesh:- “There can be no escape from this principle - the priest must be of the same nature as the people and he must therefore offer for himself as well as for them.” This he says is “proof that Jesus had to be of our (sinful) nature.” This argument however, is a ‘bubble’ for there is no substance to it – it may look solid enough but one pin-prick and it is gone! It is an example of a logical argument based on a false premise, which has therefore to arrive at a false conclusion. To quote A.L.Wilson:- “where the premise is false, the best logician is the least safe guide.”

And this is ‘the bubble’ - Jesus Christ was not a priest; He was of the Tribe of Juda, not of Levi, and therefore could not have fulfilled the office of a priest. Jesus Christ was the Offering; not the Offerer, the offerings were eaten by the priests who served at the altar!

The parallel which H.C.Gates could have made here is that even as those priests who ate of the offering so are we to eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of the Lamb of God - “Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you.”

Jesus Christ became our High Priest, interceding for us, in heaven – a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Perhaps someone else would like to comment on the point regarding the priests in the future being mortal.

Russell Gregory