

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 170

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IMPORTANT NOTE

In our last Circular Letter there was one serious mistake which I would be most grateful if all readers would please amend.

Page 23, 3rd paragraph, line 11 reads:-

"...this signifying the crucifixion of God's Son by the seed of the woman..."

This should of course read:-

"...this signifying the crucifixion of God's Son by the seed of the serpent..."

There were many other errors which were missed in our proof-reading of the last C.L. (someone counted eighteen!), for which we sincerely apologize. Most of these will be seen as typing errors and the correct meaning will be clear, but the error noted above is a careless mistake for me to make in the first place and I would please ask everyone to amend their copies so that no one can mistake our understanding.

Russell.

Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends,

Loving greetings to all our readers. We hope you will find this Circular Letter interesting and helpful. Spring is almost here which is a miracle that takes place every year before our eyes and which if we are not careful we tend to take for granted. But the wonder of the profusion of greenery and beautiful blossoms gives most hearts a lift.

The following piece appeared in a London Newspaper recently. I was surprised to find it had been written by Nick Howard, the son of the one time Home Secretary in the last Government. Michael Howard never seemed to me a very impressive individual, but obviously his son is a thoughtful person of some quality:

“A few weeks ago I picked up a copy of the Oxford University student newspaper to find that I had been accused of “spiritual Nazism” by one of Oxford’s rabbis, Shmuley Boteach.

This is a horrifying claim. It is extremely serious to be associated with the Nazis - who shattered the windows of every Jewish shopkeeper in Berlin on Kristallnacht, who extracted the gold from the teeth of their concentration camp victims, and who attempted to wipe out every living member of an ancient race.

It might well be asked why I, an undergraduate at St. Catherine’s have been publicly condemned in this way. The origin of the incident lies in my willingness to argue that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. Though I have a Jewish background, I became a Jewish believer in Jesus well before arriving at Oxford. My efforts to convince Jewish students that Christianity is fulfilled Judaism, and my willingness to uphold this belief in public, have been followed by Rabbi Boteach’s statement.

The basis of his claim is that spiritual Nazism is the promotion of one faith “as being superior to another.” It is certainly true that the Christian Union has recently held an event with a talk entitled “Is Jesus The Messiah?” to which Jewish under-graduates were invited. It should be emphasized that there was no deliberate manipulation of visitor’s emotions by displays of affection, as has been alleged. There was simply kosher food, since it would have been a bit awkward to invite Jewish friends to a lunch which they could not eat.

The aim behind this event, and others like them addressed to different audiences, is always to present the claim of Jesus Christ to be the risen Lord of the whole world. It is never to “target” particular people for “conversion.” The decision to accept or reject the claims of Jesus is a personal one, based on reason. Any underhand method designed to influence such a decision would be absurd as well as offensive.

However Rabbi Boteach would still argue that it is wrong to give a talk that implies that Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus are mistaken, and ought to reconsider. He would still say that my actions have displayed “spiritual Nazism”.

In considering his point of view, it must be remembered that Jesus was a historical figure, whose teaching was recorded by witnesses. On numerous occasions, He claimed to be the Jewish Messiah - the one promised throughout the Hebrew Scriptures to be the rescuer of mankind. For example, the Gospel of John includes His conversation with the woman at the well. In reply to her statement: “I know that the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us,” Jesus says: “I who speak to you am He.”

This claim is either right or wrong. And if Jesus was wrong, if His claim to be the Messiah was a delusion, then He can be no one’s Messiah. Christianity is fulfilled in Judaism - you could call it Judaism plus Jesus - and if you take away the Judaism part by saying Jesus is not the Messiah, then you are left with a confused liar. He would not be worthy of anyone’s respect - let alone their obedience.

If all the sacrifices demanded in the Jewish Scriptures did not point to the great, final sacrifice of Jesus Himself on the Cross, then Jesus is on the same level as the loyalist terrorist Billy Wright - a petty rebel dying an ignoble death, despised by his countrymen.

How strange and ridiculous it would be for Christians to wear crosses around their necks, as some do, if the Cross were not the place of the most important sacrifice in the history of Judaism. It would be like wearing a silver replica of an electric chair, or of a hangman’s noose. If Jesus did not fulfil the Jewish law and prophesies, then the Christian religion would be based on the claims of a liar.

So if Rabbi Boteach and others are willing to hold debates with the intention of disproving Jesus' claims to be the Messiah, are they not trying to prove that Christianity is false - in other words, that Judaism is true, Christianity untrue, and that therefore "one faith is superior to another".

If this is so, surely the most loving thing for them to do would be to hold events with the specific aim of persuading Christians that they are living a lie.

There is another point, which involves our freedom and willingness to present the ideas we believe to be true to others. If we are not prepared to face up to claims that are either wrong or right, and try to persuade others of our views, how can we expect to stand up to any future Nazis? On what basis could we argue against their claims? We must contend for the things we believe to be true, with humility and respect, if we are to guard against the future domination of men like Hitler. This is not "spiritual Nazism," but its opposite: love for our fellow human beings."

I think Nick Howard shows a very good spirit indeed in his reply to Rabbi Boteach, who seems to display a singular inability to be temperate in his choice of expression. Nick Howard lives up to the injunction that a soft answer turneth away wrath. I hope the Rabbi read what the young man wrote to him in reply and will feel ashamed of himself.

Love to all, Helen Brady,

Sometime last year Brother Leo Dreifuss wrote to me concerning a portion of the Book of Revelation. I am sorry to have mislaid his original letter but he again writes:-

"Now many months ago I put a question for the Circular Letter which must have gone astray during your upheaval with all that building.

It concerns the five fallen kings of Revelation 17:10-12. "...five are fallen and one is, and the other is not yet come..."

Now according to Robert Roberts in his "Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse" these five kings represent five different constitutions of the Roman government, all past at the time of the Revelation. He lists them in chapter 11 of his lectures, dealing with Revelation chapters 17 and 18, (see page 132 of the 1940, 5th edition). They are 1. Regal. 2. Consular. 3, Dictatorial. 4. Decemviral (meaning ten men). 5. Tribunitial (ruled by a tribunal) and on page 135 he also lists the remaining three - 6. Imperial (at John's lifetime). 7. Gothic (the Goths brought the Roman Empire to its end). 8 Papal. This appears to be the Christadelphian teaching.

Another interpretation was brought to my attention by some very sincere people. They interpret the five kings as five empires, past at John's time - 1 Egypt. 2. Assyria. 3. Babylon. 4. Medo-Persian. 5. Greece. 6. Rome - at the time of John, - then 7. Anglo-American Empire, and 8, United Europe, yet future, which will bring about Armageddon.

While we certainly cannot be dogmatic on such matters I would like to hear readers opinions and comments."

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

Following the correspondence in our last Circular Letter between Mr and Mrs Holley, Jehovah's Witnesses, and myself I was sent the following leaflet which D.Wilson of "End Time Ministries," has kindly given me permission to reproduce: -

Jehovah's Witnesses Warning - Dangerous Reading

Why? It will cost them faith in their religion. They shouldn't read any further! Why? Because the authors of this study believe and use the Bible which makes it dangerous for Jehovah's Witnesses to read this. Of course if their teaching cannot stand up to Bible investigation then there's something wrong! Therefore, whether you are a Jehovah's Witness or not you should seriously study what is written here lest at the end of life's journey you find that your spiritual house is built on sand. I know that if you are a Jehovah's Witness you are forbidden to read such as this and must only read what is provided by the Watch-tower movement.

Break Loose - Read On. Since our eternal destiny depends on our relationship to Jesus Christ it is of utmost importance that we should get as true and clear an understanding of Him as possible. We hope in these papers to investigate;

- 1) The Person of Jesus Christ. Was He an archangel or the Son of Jehovah God?
- 2) His relationship to God. Is He one with Jehovah or is He another god?
- 3) The question of the Trinity. This word is not in the Bible.

In this leaflet we want to consider another most important subject:

The Resurrection of Jesus. Our only study book is the Bible because it matters not what other books say, the Word of God, inspired by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:21), is the only reliable source of information and must be the final authority.

The fact of the death of Jesus on the Cross is not so much questioned. But what became of His body on the third day has been a source of contention since its mysterious disappearance from the tomb nearly 2000 years ago. The Jewish Priests feared He would rise from the dead and they did all they could to prevent it by having the tomb sealed and a guard of soldiers set to watch (Matthew 27:62-66).

What Happened? On the morning of the third day a frightening thing happened: an angel from heaven in dazzling white came, rolled back the stone and sat on it! and the guards were like dead men! (Matthew 28:2-4). When they recovered they went to the priests and told them what had taken place. The Jewish Council knew what had happened so they decided to give large bribes to the soldiers to say that while they slept, the disciples came and stole the body - some guards! To sleep on duty meant certain death but these Jews knew that a big enough bribe to the Governor would seal his mouth too. This story was set in motion and with variations has continued to this day. Especially in the last 100 years, with increasing satanic attacks upon God and His Word, this lie has been vigorously promoted. The Bishop of Durham, representative of a host of others in high places, speaks unashamedly against the Bible account of what took place on the resurrection morning. All non-Christian religions and all the cults are agreed in denying the truth of the resurrection.

Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses doctrine is in agreement with the Bishop of Durham that it was only a spiritual resurrection. The extent to which they will go rather than believe what is so clearly stated in the Bible reminds us of the sign over the door of the old blacksmith's forge - "ALL SORTS OF TWISTINGS AND TURNINGS DONE HERE". As we read what the Watchtower writers say we wonder how they can claim to believe the Bible.

For Example. Resurrection "from the dead" is stated 74 times in the New Testament; 39 of these directly refer to Jesus rising. The dictionary meaning of resurrection is "A rising from the dead," "To come to life again." The original Greek word "anastasis" used 40 times in the New Testament, literally means "A rising up." "From the dead" has only one meaning which even the most unenlightened can understand.

How then can the Watchtower leaders write, and their disciples teach, “God doubtless removed the body of Jesus as it would have presented an insurmountable obstacle to the faith of the apostles and disciples”? (Awake) Indeed the opposite was the case because the fact of the physical resurrection of Jesus confirmed their faith as we read in John 2:18-22.

Deviation. Jehovah’s Witnesses will do anything to divert the questioner away from this portion because it shows so clearly how far the founders of the movement deviated from the truth. Only the spiritually blinded could fail to understand so plain a statement. Here the Jews asked Jesus for some sign to prove that God was His Father (verse 16), but Jesus only said “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews disputed this but “he spoke of the temple of his body,” and in verse 22 we read, “when therefore he was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.”

Why? Why? Why? Will Jehovah’s Witnesses not believe Jesus when He said “I will raise it up... This spake He of His body” (John 2:19-22).

Question: Raise what up? There is only one answer - His body,

Why reject the angels’ witness? “You seek Jesus who was crucified. He is risen. Tell His disciples He is risen from the dead,” not “dissolved into gases” or “disposed of and put out of existence,” or “Almighty God disposed of the fleshly body of Jesus Christ.” (all from Watchtower publications).

Don’t be so easily deceived. Whatever deceitful answer is resorted to here many simple questions remain.

- 1) If the disciples took the body, as the Jewish priests said, why did they take the clothes off?
- 2) If God removed the body as the Jehovah’s Witnesses say, why did He not remove the clothes also?
- 3) If it was dissolved into gasses why were the clothes not dissolved too?

Refusal. For about half an hour I tried to get a young man to answer “What was dead?” He tried hard to get me off the subject but would not answer my question. He knew that to admit that it was Jesus’ body that was dead he would therefore be admitting that it was Jesus’ body that was raised up, and that would be confessing the error of what he had been taught.

In discussing the same issue a lady worker would not admit that it was the body that was dead and in a desperate attempt to justify their “spiritual resurrection” theory, she said that the spirit was dead too. When I reminded her that Jesus had said “Destroy this temple” (His body), and I will raise it up, and how could He do so if His spirit was dead, she said that He was raised up a new spirit! This would be creation, not resurrection. At this point she finished the conversation.

Warning. Jesus warned that in the last days many false prophets would arise and would deceive many (Matthew 24:11). We are in the closing days of the age and false prophets proliferate so it is of utmost importance that we know and adhere to what the inspired Bible writers say and reject all contradictory interpretations.

Other leaflets on this subject, prophecy and the New Age will be sent free on request. Our only aim is to help people to see the truth of God’s Word. If you think we may be able to help you find peace with God through faith in the risen, reigning and soon returning Lord Jesus Christ, drop us a line.

D.Wilson, 3 Oakwood, Kilfera, Kilkenny, Republic of Ireland.

Brother Harold Dawson writes:-

“If I was talking to any Bible student who included in his tenets of belief and faith that Jesus Christ died on the Cross as a Representative of sinners as a whole, I would ask him if he would be interested to hear about the abundant weight of evidence in Scripture that in reality must lead us to a very different conclusion, and I would also say to him that what we believe about the Saviour of mankind is and always has been, since the time of Christ Himself, of vital importance, very probably, and I would say “very probably” because the Scriptures does indeed give clear guidance as to what we should “think about Jesus Christ,” with the warning that we must all stand before His Judgment Seat.

At this point my Bible student friend may say, Well, what about the statement “Jesus was born of a woman, under the law” and go on to say that means the Law of Sin and Death, and that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and so Jesus represented sinners in His death on the Cross. So that I would have reminded him that Jesus did no sin and neither was even guile found in His mouth” and that Jesus retorted to His accusers, “which of you convinceth me of sin?” i.e. transgression of the Law, and this they could not do and hated Him for it.

Jesus also urged common sense in understanding the Law when He said by way of example, “That the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and if a farm animal was in a ditch on the Sabbath then obviously get it out and don’t leave to maybe die by leaving it in the ditch till Monday morning.

So point No. 1 - Jesus in His three year ministry brought to the Cross a sinless record showing that a human being can keep the 10 Commandments, if he tries to. Ah, says my Bible student friend, but what if he doesn’t? and we are all in the same boat are we not? Yes, indeed say I, but God is faithful to forgive us our sins if we confess them in prayer and as you know we have washed them away in Baptism which relates to the Sacrifice Jesus endured on the Cross - the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. Oh yes that is what He was and is - but the proof of the quite wonderful love expressed in His sacrifice for us. The just for the unjust to bring us unto God.

I mentioned proof to you my friend, so I would refer you to the facts of Jesus’ birth. First the angelic statement to Joseph, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary, to wife for that which is born of her is of the Holy Spirit. Now ask yourself the question, can anyone claim such a background to our birth? It explains the miracles Jesus performed but He was a man with a Spiritual mind, and capable of transgression of the Law and He indicated so often and with such discernment the strengths and weaknesses of the people around Him. Example, the woman taken in the act of adultery and stoning was the punishment. “Where are thine accusers? There are none my Lord. Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way and sin no more.” What love and what discernment. No wonder the disciples said on Galilee “What manner of man is this that even the wind and waves obey Him?!

But there is more of course, much more, indeed yes. Again when the angel appeared to Mary she was told that she had found favour with God and her child Jesus, shall be great. The Son of the Highest (God) who would give to Him the throne of His (relative) father, David. His Kingdom should have no end. To this Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.”

My friend, do you not begin to see that Jesus was a special man, a future King of the world? No Representative of sinners but one who was qualified to pay the price of Sin (of us all), through His own Law-keeping, He is our righteousness, and as the Son of God, not born by the will of the flesh, but by the will of the Spirit - The second Adam who did obey, whereas the first Adam was disobedient. In suffering death Jesus, born a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, was not guilty on any account; hence the declaration “Thou wilt not leave His soul in hell, neither shall thy Holy One see corruption.

For our part we cannot earn salvation by or like some competition. Speaking of salvation the Apostle states; not by works, lest any should boast. By Grace are ye saved, and that not of your selves. It is the gift of God.

At the moment of Jesus’ death on the Cross Jesus said, “It is finished” and the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom. The way back to God, like a bridge for us to cross for those who wish to. Jesus in

His death accomplished this for us. He paid the price of our transgression but as the Holy One of God, and no representative of sinners, but rather and actually in our place.

Well you have a choice regarding what you believe; for my part I choose to honour and appreciate what Jesus Christ did for me. May we both have a part in what God has prepared for those who love Him. I realize that you do, or probably do believe much of what I have said in this letter and I hope that you do. I am reminded of the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Yes dear friend, if Jesus was a debtor Himself how could He have paid our debt for us? In His first advent He did not take the power and told Pilate so. But next time it will be very different as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Yours in that Hope, Brother Harold L.Dawson."

The three articles which follow were written by our late Brother F.J.Pearce and they first appeared in the Circular Letters in the early 1950's. They are available in our booklet entitled "Alive In Christ Jesus" and are printed here as they have a bearing on our understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ and so link up with the two final articles in this C.L.:-

1 Scripture Teaching On Death

Have you considered the word "death" in the Scriptures? Just take up a concordance and see how many times it is used and how applied. It is for this reason this short article is written, to bring to mind the various uses, so that a more enlightened view in general can be seen and so help the Bible student to a better understanding of what is not generally considered.

1. Natural Death

The Scriptures plainly teach that God's creation was first natural, with the purpose of developing character through the Grace of God - dust, earthy (Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:46,47). The natural order was not made to last for ever - it would sooner or later decay.

We will give the best definition that we have which agrees with Scripture: -

"Death and corruption, then, with reproduction is the fundamental law of the physical system of the six days. Adam and Eve, and all the other animals born of the earth would have died and gone to corruption if there had been no transgression, provided there had been no further interference with the physical system than Moses recorded in the history of the six days. The life and death of Adam and Eve were predicated, not upon any peculiarity of their animal constitution, but upon the relation they might come to sustain to the two trees in Paradise. From this we learn that they pleased themselves under the law which sentenced them to death. From these premises it will be seen that we dissent from our correspondent's notion that 'all creation became corrupt,' by which we understand him to mean, constitutionally impregnated with corruptibility at the fall. We believe that the change was moral, not physical."

- Dr. Thomas, "Herald of The Kingdom," Volume 5, page 159.

The fifth chapter of Genesis repeats "and he died." This is natural death.

2. Judicial or Inflicted death

This death is distinguished from natural death, whichever way brought about, by law: whether a calamity such as a flood (Genesis 7); or fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:23, etc.), or upon individuals such as is described under the Law of Moses, "shall be put to death" (Exodus 21:12-17). This is judicial death, as in the present day case of a murderer; death by execution for breach of law. There is a second death for those

who are responsible at the second coming of Christ for those who have died in their sins. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). This is not natural death - it is Judicial, as was the case under the Law of Moses (Hebrews 10:28), or by being raised and suffered by infliction of the second death by Christ (Revelation 21:8; Luke 19:27).

Many incidents could be put, but it is quite evident to those who have eyes to see,

3. Federal Death, while Alive Naturally

“By the trespass of one many be dead” - Romans 5:15.
“Then were we dead” - 2 Corinthians 5:14.
“Ye were dead in trespasses and sins” - Ephesians 2:1.
“Dead in your sins” - Colossians 2:13.

This death can be termed a legal death, but it must not be confused with the violent death by execution for breach of law.

Adam is the father and the federal head of the human race. All federally died, or were dead, in Adam. “They were made sinners” (Romans 5:19); “Sold under The Sin” (Romans 7:14). Without God, Christ and Hope (Ephesians 2:12). God and Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that He might have mercy upon ail through faith in His Beloved Son (Romans 3:9; 11:32; Galatians 3:22). Though the federal law concludes all under the one sin of Adam, it has to be recognised individually before any one can be doctrinally in Adam. (See No. 5 below).

4. Symbolic Death

This death is associated in two particulars. Under the Edenic and Mosaic laws the sacrifice of the animals pointed to the death of the Lamb of God. The offerers had to put their hands on the head of the animal. They understood that the death the animal suffered was their due. Thus they died a symbolic death in the death of the animal.

Under the Christian dispensation the believer must be associated with the sacrificial death of Christ in the waters of Baptism. “Buried with Him by baptism into His death” (Romans 6:4). They thus die in symbol or a figurative death and acknowledge the literal death of their Redeemer on the Cross. “Now if we be dead (died) with Christ (verse 8), likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin. (verse 11).

5. Spiritual death

A person cannot die this death who has not been made alive unto God through Christ Jesus: they must be born again, from above; of the incorruptible Seed, the Word of God (John 3:3, margin; James 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23).

“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth (naturally)” (1 Timothy 5:6). “I know thy works... that thou livest, and art dead (spiritually)” (Revelation 3:1).

These are those who say they are Jews, and are not; and will suffer the second death as wages. (They have trod underfoot the blood of Christ, and crucified the Son of God afresh) (Hebrews 6:6).

The parable of the Sower explains this very clearly. Endure for a time, pleasures, riches, temptations choke the word, so that no fruit is brought forth. They will be cast away (Luke 8).

* * * * *

2

Legally Dead To Sin Legally Alive To Christ

We feel that this subject could be enlarged and that we should not conclude it without mentioning the Blessed Hope - the Unspeakable gift - so we put a few passages for your consideration.

- “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.”
- Romans 6:11.
“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ.”
- Colossians 3:3
“For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.”
- 2 Timothy 2:11.
“That we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.”
- 1 Peter 2:24.

These had become enlightened and recognised that they were as “dead” in Adam under the federal principle and had individually obeyed from the heart the doctrine of baptism. They became alive to the fact that they were dead, and responsible, so they died to the Sin and became alive. Rose in Newness of Life; passed from, or out of, the death sentence into the life sentence. Again:

- “Let the dead bury their dead”
- Matthew 8:22.
“God is not the God of the dead”
- Matthew 22:32.
“Ye are become dead to the Law”
- Romans 7:4.
“I through the law am dead to the law”
- Galatians 2:19.

Try and put these in their respective places. Study Romans 5 and see how the One Sin of Adam brought legal condemnation, and how the One Act of Jesus removed the legal condemnation.

- “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive”
- 1 Corinthians 15:22.
“For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge,
that One died for all, then were all dead”
- 2 Corinthians 5:14,
“Put off the old man (Adam) and put on the New man”
- Colossians 3:9,10.

Where the offence abound, grace did much more abound. Let us rightly divide the Word of God, which is able to make us wise unto Salvation, and is able to give us an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God through faith in the blood of the Lamb who died that we might live.

Read and study the Scriptures, because if we speak not according to these oracles there is no light in us.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (“in whom” - margin) - Romans 5:12.

“For this reason - as through one man (the) Sin entered into the world (in whom all sinned) and through (the) Sin (the) Death; so also (the) Death passed upon all men” - Emphatic Diaglott - (the word “the” shown in brackets is in the word for word translation).

This twelfth verse of Romans 5 is generally understood and brought up to prove that natural death was the result of sin. We know of none other than ourselves who disagree with the majority. We say that it was a Violent Death. It is because of this disagreement that this article is written, in order to investigate which of the deaths is meant. The word “death” in the Greek, or in the translations, of itself proves nothing, as a study of the following examples will show;

- | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| John 5:24. | John 11:4,13. | Rom. 5:10. | 1 Cor. 15:56. | James 1:15. |
| James 5:20. | 1 John 3:14. | Rev. 1:18 | Rom.5:12 (twice) | Rom.14:17. |
| Rom. 6:23. | 1 Cor. 15:21,54. | Rev. 20:6, | Rev.21:4. | Rom. 5:21 |
| 1 Cor. 15:55. | 1 John 5:16,17 (4 times). | | | |

Before we study the 12th verse of Romans 5 we feel sure that none will dispute that such passages as Romans 6:23; James 1:15; and Revelation 20:6 are quite decisive as to what kind of death is meant. Each proves that it is judicial as the result of sin as wages, and is none other than the Second Death.

There is no difficulty in seeing this second death at the end of the age by Christ as being executed upon sinners, as they are corruptible. "Bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). Hence our meaning of a violent death. I must confess that when I first studied the truth, as I understand it now, the 12th verse was a very obstinate difficulty. Therefore I can sympathize with al! who, through the generally preconceived idea which is universally believed, experience the difficulty of not believing that natural death is meant.

The general way of interpreting any verse is by the context in which it is set. If this is unsatisfactory other Scripture must then be compared with the general teaching of the whole subject.

It is plain that Adam is the man referred to, who was created out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7); or, in the words of Paul, "The first man Adam was made a living soul... The first man is of the earth, earthy" - 1 Corinthians 15:45,47.

Let us now consider the evidence of Scripture and reason with a view to ascertaining without any preconceived ideas. Adam was called a "living soul," What is a living soul? The answer to this should be sufficient; the Hebraist words means all creatures - man, beast, fish and fowl wherein is life. Who will say that the nature of all these creatures was different from what it is now? How many natures are revealed in Scripture? Two: corruptible and incorruptible. Are not the words "whose seed is in itself... be fruitful and multiply." Green herbs, and fruitful trees, meat for man and beast prove the necessity of a natural creation needing food to eat and reproduce?

A law was given to Adam "thou shalt not eat..." (Genesis 2:17). Why was a law given? It was given as a test to prove two things: free will, and a natural desire to do the contrary. This point should be uppermost in our minds; without law there is no transgression (Romans 4:15), Adam disobeyed and by so doing committed the first sin on record. We have no difficulty in knowing what sin is. "Sin is transgression of Law" (1 John 3:4). It should be remembered that whatever nature Adam had it was in this nature that he committed his sin, so there was no need to give him another nature, to make him of a sinful character, to do that which he had already done with the nature he then possessed.

These are the facts of the case which prove that there was first a natural creation. There is no more difficulty here than in our own case as natural creatures. It is no use denying these facts, and making such statements that are pure assumptions, without any proof from Scripture nor reason, such as these:

"Adam's nature was changed,"

"God infused in Adam the germs of corruption."

"The Tree of Life was to keep corruption away."

"It needed a miracle to reduce Adam to the nature of the beast." etc...

So the preconceived idea that Adam and creation was not corruptible before he sinned, in the face of all evidence, must be thrown to the four winds of heaven. This accepted and all is plain, that the sentence of the law could be carried out; as in present day hanging.

Without going into the study of the Hebraist words "Muth Temuth" and "B'Yom," another proof in itself, let us continue to examine verse 12: Adam was the first man. He committed sin. Death is by sin. The animal was slain in God's mercy instead of Adam - which is the explanation of the violent death of Jesus (Revelation 13:2; Genesis 22:13; Matthew 20:28, etc.).

"So death passed upon all men..." As there are no plain words in Scripture to prove that this death is what others would have us believe, they have had to invent the above phrases. Let us see if these words are capable of being understood in harmony with the facts. "Passed upon" surely cannot mean either of the man-made ideas. Without any words of ours let us go to the same chapter which proves that it was, and is, a sentence passed upon us by Law, and does not mean a physical change or any of the above assumptions.

“Therefore, indeed, as through One Offence, Sentence came on men to condemnation, so also through One Righteous Act, Sentence came on all men to Justification of life.” - Verse 18. - “Emphatic Diaglott.”

This verse alone proves (not contradicts) the meaning of those words. Will John 5:24 help you to see it? “But has passed out of the death into the life.” Is this not a present legal fact that the death that was passed upon all men can be removed now? Is not this in harmony with the fact of the other half of this verse that the sentence of life came on all through the sacrificial death of Jesus?

Again; “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” – Romans 8:1.

If the sentence of death or condemnation means either natural death or infused corruption, to suit preconceived ideas, we have no hesitation in saying that these Scriptures are useless.

“For all have sinned” or, as in the margin “in whom all have sinned.” We know that the marginal rendering is not acceptable to the natural death theory, but a little further thought, seeing that it in no way interferes with the sense of the verse, chapter, nor the whole Scripture that Adam and Jesus are two federal Heads, the Emphatic Diaglott has got in brackets. We ask, can these words “for all have sinned” mean that every soul born of Adam has literally sinned - transgressed law? No one will be so foolish as to say this. The non-responsible question proves it.

Again let the chapter explain it.

“For as by One man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous - Verse 19.

This verse, like the previous, gives the sense how all have sinned in a federal head - made sinners by law or constitution. While the many cover the all, we can see that strictly speaking it is only many, not all, are doctrinally in Adam, though all are under the law of sin and are corruptible.

The same can be seen and applied in the next half of the verse. By the sacrificial death of Christ - shedding of blood - the one act made many righteous. This gift is free to all, but it is only the many who will accept it, though corruptible.

Let us take another verse, which cannot be understood but in the sense we have tried to explain it in harmony with the whole factual evidence.

“For if through the offence of one many be dead (or, died. R.V.) - verse 15.

Ask yourself this simple question; Are we literally dead, or have we all literally died? The answer should be enough for you to see that apart from the federal law, put into operation by God, there is no solution. Again, if natural death is the meaning of the 12th verse, we ask, Why should Paul say, “nevertheless The death reigned from Adam to Moses”? There is no sense in making such a statement if natural death is meant. Is not natural death still with us? Will natural death affect the saints at the coming of Christ? Can we make you think by adding another verse?

“The Law entered that the offence might abound” - verse 20.

The sin and The death entered into the world by Adam. The Law of Moses entered into the Mosaic world or economy that the offence of Adam might abound in two particular ways; the first that they by transgression of that law would be sinners, as was Adam, and second, it was to teach them the need of Redemption, as in Adam’s case. Eden and the whole sacrificial law was to bring them to Christ. There is no need to say much on this verse from the Emphatic Diaglott, but we do ask you to study it, as no solution to the problem can ever be had from the writings of man-made creeds based on the Romish doctrine of the 9th Article of the Church of England. God would leave us in no doubt if He intended us to believe in His injustice.

Much more could be said but if what we have written is not enough to convince the reader, we will just use these strong words as a last resort to make you realize that it is pure blasphemy to uphold such a false

doctrine which makes God renounce His Moral Law. Here are the words: God is punishing every creature for the one sin of Adam. After the suffering they, with Adam, pay his debt. Then you provide Jesus to pay the price of sin in a violent death, to release all those who have paid it already!

“The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” - Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20.

Being Justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom. God hath sent forth... through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believed in Jesus” - Romans 3:24-26.

* * * * *

3 In Adam and In Christ

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

1 Corinthians 15:22.

This passage is very little understood because the general statement of Scripture is left out of account. The foremost reason is the preconceived idea of the fall of Adam which according to the 9th Article of Faith in the Church of England, is a physical change of nature:- “Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but it is in the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam”. Hence the following list of principles: the Justice of God’s Law; The Federal Principle: The Death that came by man; the Death that Christ died; these and the first quotation are left to the confusion of each other.

Of course there are many ways of getting round the difficulties. Here is one:- That all in Adam is like a large circle which includes every soul from Eden to the end of the 1,000 years; that all in Christ is like a small circle within the larger one.

While we agree that in comparison with the whole of the descendants of Adam the called, chosen or enlightened are few in number, we have no fear in saying that this idea does not meet the case.

If “in Adam” means the physical nature which is the condemnation passed upon all men, then we are in Adam when we are in Christ, because the condemnation is with us so long as we live and even after resurrection, as we are supposed to rise with it. Here we are faced with a flat contradiction of Romans 8:1 which states that, “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” and the words of Jesus recorded in John 5:24, “He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from (or out of) death into life.” Two passages which prove the justice of God’s Law.

It is a general idea that natural death is the result of Adam’s sin and that he paid the price 930 years after he had been typically forgiven and redeemed. Also that irrespective of his death all have to pay it individually. Then, the greatest stumbling block of all is that our Beloved Master went through such an awful and dreadful ordeal to pay the price of sin, which could have been avoided if natural death would have sufficed, and each had a part to pay before Redemption could be accomplished. Thus the death of Jesus is made to be a mere side issue in comparison with the love and Justice of God and the necessity of such a loving sacrifice which Jesus so willingly gave for the sin of the world.

Referring to the context of the chapter (1 Corinthians 15) we read “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” Not to save us from dying. First natural; if natural death is the condemnation Christ died in vain and all have perished.

Is there a difference between “dying in Adam” and “the soul that sinneth it shall die”? (Ezekiel 18:20).

Is there any difference between:

1. The results of the death of the ignorant (Psalm 49:20; Isaiah 27:14; Romans 2:12; John 3:21),
2. The enlightened responsible (James 4-17), and
3. Those who die in Christ (1 Corinthians 15)?

How does a person get “in Christ”? Is this a physical change of nature? Can a person be in Christ before being made incorruptible after resurrection?

Here we give some evidence in harmony with Scripture:

“For an individual cannot be in a federal person unless introduced into him” - Dr. Thomas in “Elpis Israel” page 134.

“Baptism is the means of the present (legal) union with Christ. There is a passing out of Adam into Christ” - Robert Roberts.

Are we unreasonable to think that there is a legal union with Christ and Adam as federal heads in contrast to the physical? How does a person become “in Adam”? Is it not upon the same principle of enlightenment and realising that we have been introduced into him by law? Have we not got to die by law to Adamic relationship, just as the Jew did to the law? (Romans 7:4). Did not Paul recognize that he was alive without the law, though a Pharisee and that (the) sin revived and he died? (Romans 7:10; Romans 8:2; Galatians 2:19). While the Laws of Death and Life are over all they are not operative until we are introduced or enlightened and responsible to such laws.

Adam and Jesus are our “Doctrinal Fathers,” and only when we are cognisant of the facts are we related to the respective laws and consequences. The ignorant are not in either of these categories, and we have full confidence in the Justice of God as to His requirements. We have no doubt that no man dies because of Adam’s sin, or responsible for it (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20). Cannot we now see that there is a big difference between God “winking at the ignorant,” who perish like the beasts, and the just punishment of those who know and obey not His commandments (Mark 16:16; Luke 19:27).

To sum up; all in Adam die as the wages of sin is the second death and natural death will not be taken into account. All in Christ shall be made alive (*Zoe*) irrespective of being naturally dead. The “all” in each case is the “all” in their respective category, with the exclusion of the ignorant. So it should be plain from all angles that this verse means exactly what it says, without any confusion or contradiction.

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and His wonderful works to the children of men” - Psalm 107:8.

What wonderful wisdom and Divine justice in Mercy and a glorious solution to a problem so simple which the babes can see, and yet is hid from the wise and prudent of this world.

Brother F.J.Pearce.

In the Circular Letter No. 166 for May/June last year I wrote :-

A correspondent criticized me for saying that W.F.Barling was guilty of “wilful misuse of reasoning” and this “was shameful to the utmost” where he introduced into his argument the system of redemption from slavery used by a pagan country in order to argue against the system used in the Law of Moses! It was considered unfair of me “to criticize W.F.Barling as the writer has long since past from the scene and cannot answer for himself.” I still think it utterly deplorable to oppose Scripture teaching in this way – all because it didn’t suit Christadelphian beliefs!

W.F.Barling had his chances, so turning next to another Christadelphian we oppose for misunderstanding of Scripture I corresponded with A.D.Norris whom I had met about fifty years ago at a Conference in Huddersfield.

“I would plead with A.D.Norris to reason it (the understanding of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ) out according to Scripture before it is too late.”

The following two articles on “Understanding The Sacrifice Of Christ” are the result of this correspondence. My own article is printed first, a copy of which I sent to Brother Norris last September. I received his article in February. We extend an open invitation to all who wish to write in with comments, whatever your views may be. We will do our best to publish them in our next Circular Letter.

Russell Gregory

1st Article - expressing the Nazarene Fellowship view:

Understanding The Sacrifice of Christ

If we do not understand how and why the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion saves us how can we say we believe? We ought to devote time and prayer to the matter so we can be fully persuaded in our own minds independent of others, especially of those who would say these doctrines are too deep, or require long experience or training to understand them. This is not so, for the truth is straight forward and easy to follow, and once we grasp it clearly in our minds we can go on to plumb greater depths of Scriptural truths with clarity of thought and conviction.

Follow Scripture carefully and prayerfully; the path we take from Eden to Calvary has to be straight and true for we must understand what happened in Eden to understand the sacrifice of Christ, then the message of the Cross gives great comfort to the heart and purpose to life.

To fulfil His purpose God is calling out a people for His Name, people who will strive to do what is right in His sight, even if necessary to the giving up of their lives, to bring honour and glory to Him. Such people are the children of God. These are “True worshippers” who “shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” - John 4:23.

As parents we love our children. We set them rules of acceptable behaviour and if a child makes a mistake we do what we can to make matters right again and encourage the child to do better in future. All is done out of love for the child to help him or her make right choices and develop good character. This is the pattern of God’s dealings with His children. Adam was God’s son by creation and he made a mistake; he made a wrong choice. Our story starts here and shows how God, his Father put matters right for him, and for us.

The Law of Sin and Death

Adam was created from the dust of the ground and was a living soul dependent on the natural processes common to all animals and therefore corruptible. The difference between man and the lower animals is that God endowed him with the intellectual powers of a reasoning mind and free will so when placed under law he could choose and so develop good character well pleasing to his Creator.

In Eden Adam was placed under law which required perfect obedience, whilst disobedience would incur the penalty of death. Forgiveness had no place in the law of sin and death in Eden and should Adam sin the debt of life owed to the law had to be paid. So when Adam transgressed he incurred judicial death as the penalty and was in dire straits and could do nothing to regain his freedom from the death penalty. Perfect obedience from that moment on would not have sufficed, for the requirements of the law would not have been met as his life was already forfeit. Even the giving of his life would not have been sufficient payment for he now had only an imperfect life to offer, and an imperfect life was not equal to the perfect life he had forfeited. Indeed being forfeited his life had no value.

The Scriptures teach that there was a change in Adam's relationship to his Creator when he disobeyed the law. This was a legal matter. His legal position changed, previously he was innocent now he was guilty; he had been free of condemnation, now he was under condemnation; he was no longer free and his life was in pledge to sin; no longer a Son of God but a bondservant of Sin, for when he transgressed he sold himself to another owner, he became the servant of Sin and had left the house wherein he was a Son of God and sold himself into slavery (John 8:34, Romans 6:16). Yet he did not suffer the penalty for his sin, that is to say, that the penalty of "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" was not carried out.

The First Sacrifice

God in His mercy and love provided a way in which the requirement of the law would be met and Adam redeemed from his death sentence.

In the first instance we learn that an animal was slain in Eden. Instead of Adam perishing an animal perished, and the death of the animal provided a covering for him, a covering he wore as a constant reminder that the animal had died in his stead. The slain animal was the first sacrifice and it was symbolic of the one great Sacrifice to follow. It was a type of the Lamb of God who was to come to take away the Sin of the world - "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" as foretold in Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head while the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel; the head wound to the serpent being destructive of its power was to free man from bondage to the law of sin and death which bars the way to eternal life. It is law that reigns and in it we see the loving-kindness, mercy and justice of God.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," His greatest possession, to be the sacrifice for the Sin of the world so we might be persuaded of His love "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). A sacrifice in which Jesus Christ voluntarily offered Himself, who said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). His Father asked of Him the willingness to give His own life to take away the Sin of the world and thereby deliver the human race from bondage to the law of sin and death. In doing this He showed great strength of character, determination and courage.

Jesus Christ The Antitype

Before Jesus Christ could offer Himself as the sacrifice to take away the Sin of the world it was needful He be "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He had to be tried under law, like Adam, and prove Himself to be perfect for had He failed He would have been in the same position as Adam after he sinned, and quite unable to save Himself or anyone else.

Having served His years of probation Jesus Christ was rich with His own perfect character in His natural life and could have entered into eternal life without dying, but how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? In Jesus own words "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone" and that would have been His position, abiding alone, for all eternity but out of His love for us He chose to take Adam's place by dying the violent death due to Adam. It was a life for a life. It was an equivalent life to the one Adam had been given as Son of God at creation and which he had forfeited. The equivalent price which Jesus paid for Adam's redemption - "They that hated me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm 69:4). He restored life and with it the opportunity of eternal life.

When Jesus Christ said "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10) He was referring to two distinct lives. The penalty incurred by Adam was inflicted death in the day he sinned which would have resulted in him losing his natural life as well as his opportunity of eternal life. Jesus came to restore both. He came that we might have life, our redeemed life here and now and that we might have it more abundantly in the future - which is, eternal life.

But how did the one life of Jesus Christ, given in place of Adam's life save all? The Apostle Paul explains in his Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere:

The Federal Principle

The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 3:22, “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” That is to say we are all included in the Sin of Adam so that the one sacrifice which redeemed Adam and thereby gave him the opportunity of eternal life by faith does the same for us.

The Federal Principle is seen in Romans chapter 5 where the Apostle Paul shows how through the one transgression of Adam all were constituted sinners. Not made sinful, but were sold to the power of “Sin” which he personifies elsewhere as a slave-owner; and through the righteousness of one, Jesus Christ, the faithful are constituted righteous. We see then the two Federal Heads - Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam is the Federal Head of all under the law of sin and death while Jesus Christ is the Federal Head of all under Grace:-

In Adam (Romans 5)	In Christ (Romans 5)
v.10 When we were enemies	we shall be saved by His life.
v.12 By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men in whom (margin) all have sinned.	
v.15 through the offence of one many be dead.	...much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
v.16 Judgment was by one to condemnation	but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.
v.17 by one man’s offence death reigned	...they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.
v.18 by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation,	by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.
v.19 by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,	by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
v.20 the law entered that the offence might abound.	but grace did much more abound-
v.21 sin hath reigned unto death,	even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ransom

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22). Even as Moses was the only Israelite not a slave and therefore free to negotiate with Pharaoh, so likewise Jesus was the only human being not inheriting Adam’s slavery to Sin and therefore free to give His life a Ransom for many.

No one of Adam’s line could effectually lay down his life as a ransom. It had to be a life free of the condemnation under which all in Adam lived and in order to meet this necessity a Ransom had to be paid by

someone of the same flesh and blood as Adam yet with a life free from condemnation and this is the reason why Jesus was born the Son of God; He was given a new life direct from His Father, not through the line of Adam; and was related to the race being born of a woman, with the same flesh unchanged from creation.

In the law God gave to Moses regarding slavery we read that where it was impossible for a bondservant to buy his own freedom because of his poorness, the law gave the right for a near kinsman to pay the price of his redemption and so free the bondservant and his family from their servitude. The near-kinsman to Adam, who was in bondage to Sin, was Jesus Christ who was free of any bondage. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9); rich with His own life whereas we are poor. He was strong whereas we are weak, and being obedient all His natural life He gave it as the exact equivalent price to redeem Adam and all in him.

A Man who was tempted in all points as we are and made as we are of the same flesh and blood Jesus Christ was touched with the feeling of our infirmities and learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We see Jesus Christ then of His own free will, determined to please His Father, accepting the task of redeeming mankind from annihilation, going voluntarily and courageously to His death on the Cross and giving up His natural life for the sake of and in the place of His brother Adam; a life for a life, the Just for the unjust, one person paying the debt owed by another, the innocent person paying the debt owed by the guilty sinner.

It was of course substitution, as is any purchase, and it was necessary for salvation for had not Christ died on the Cross we would not have been redeemed and would still be in our sins. It was a matter of a righteous man freely paying the debt of life owed by the guilty that the guilty might not pay it and perish.

Was it unjust for Jesus Christ to give His life and die for us in this way? It was not, because He voluntarily paid it and no one took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own free will for the joy that was set before Him and in bringing many sons to glory. The Cross speaks of Love while at the same time establishing the principles of justice.

Jesus Christ came into the world to give us our natural life and with it the opportunity of life more abundant, eternal life, which is the gift of God to all who love and honour the Son.

There was no commandment demanding Jesus Christ lay down His life which, had He failed would have made Him a sinner. He voluntarily laid down His life - "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." John 10:18. The very fact that He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from crucifixion had His courage failed proves this could not have been sin had He not died, for God would have saved His life by providing the angels.

Jesus Christ did not flee in the face of evil. He gave His back to the smiter. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah shows beyond all cavil that Jesus Christ died in place of us. His life for ours.

Out of Adam and Into Christ

Jesus Christ suffered for us so that we can come out of Adam and into Christ by baptism into Him. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death...?" (Romans 6:3). We do not have to die for Sin except in symbol in the waters of baptism, from which we rise no longer in bondage to Sin, no longer under the condemnation of the law of sin and death but under the law of life by Grace through Jesus Christ.

In the foreknowledge of God He saw that Jesus Christ would take Adam's place in death so that Adam need not die for his transgression, and thereby we, in due time. Have received our natural life from him, and indeed more, than this, for we also have received the opportunity of eternal life. And so now, if we choose to do His will and keep His commandments, we shall have that life more abundantly, for our eternal life is dependent upon our baptism into Him and upon doing His will.

“Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” - John 15:13,14. Jesus Christ asks perfection of us ~ “be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” - Matthew 5:48 - it is His command for us.

Having been redeemed by Jesus Christ and baptized into Him, should we fail to do whatsoever He commands us - fail in that perfection asked of us, we can receive forgiveness for our sins through Him. “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psalm 130:3,4).

“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” - 2 Timothy 2:5.

Russell Gregory.

2nd Article - expressing the Christadelphian view:

Christ Died For Our Sins

- A.D.Norris

I am, so to speak, a card-carrying member of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship. I believe that what I now write is our common Christadelphian belief. But I do not pretend to myself that it is put in a conventional way. I have tried to see the meaning of the coming, the life and temptations, the sufferings and dying, and the resurrection and glory, of my Lord - all this in a way which does not encumber my thinking with an elaborate sacrificial vocabulary, or overlay my devotion with a heavy elaboration of types and antitypes, and constant looking over my shoulder to see whether this is the way it would have been put in, say, Leviticus; or even the Letter to the Hebrews.

I even think it may not be put in the way those Books would have put it, though I do not think that either Moses or Paul, or the Inspirer of them both, would have found anything unacceptable in it. I hope in God's mercy that they would all, especially the last, say, “This is what the ages were leading to. This is Christ walking by our sides without the leading strings which led men towards Him in the days before He came. This is Christ standing in His own right, and on His own feet.” At least, I hope they would all say that this is what I was faithfully trying to present, and that I had not altogether failed in the attempt.

I believe that what the apostles were doing, in Hebrews and Galatians and elsewhere, is what I am seeking to reproduce now. But of course those holy men of God spoke with authority and divinely granted discernment, purged of the limitations which afflict all of us who now have no open vision. What I hope to do is show how we may profit from what they did, and the stages through which they passed, as so wonderfully when the Lord struck Paul blind from human prejudices, and opened his eyes again to perceive the fullness of His Grace.

Galatians and Hebrews both help us here to let the scales - if there are any – fall away from our eyes, so that we may behold something of what God is, through them and through the life of our Lord Himself, trying to teach us. So first let these two Books speak for me with a frankness which I should not have dared to use without their encouragement. Here are a passage or so from each:

Galatians:

“I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:19,20).

“Now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.” (Galatians 4:9,10).

“For this Hagar is mount Sinai, in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” (Galatians 4:25,26).

Hebrews (in summary):

Christ and His work: better than angels (1:4) - crowned with glory and honour vastly excelling theirs (2:9) - worthy of more glory than Moses, as a Son over God's house (5:3,6) - a High Priest with a higher calling, than Aaron and his successors, the only-begotten Son of God (5:4-6) - our Leader into the true, the heavenly Most Holy Place, where He sits at the right hand of His Father, day in and day out continually (6:19,20) - His tabernacle greater and more perfect (9:11) - If the blood of animals denoted ritual cleansing, how much more will the dying of Christ cleanse the spirit? (9:13,14) - The holy place of the tabernacle was symbolic only, but [the holy place into which the risen Christ entered is real, being heaven itself (9:24) - The sacrifices of the old covenant were only symbols, ineffective in themselves and requiring endless repetition - but the offering of the Lord Jesus was once and for all, and need not and cannot be repeated (9:25-28).

“There is verily an annullment of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God “(7:18,19), “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (8:6-8,13).

“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (10:4,11,12).

“Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, not unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest... But ye are come unto mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (12:2,22).

What happened to the human race?

Whether the term “very good” refers to the creation which culminated in Adam, and sums up the ‘perfection’ of all that God made in the beginning (Genesis 1:31), or whether it looks forward to what was to be the eventual outcome when the Lord Jesus should have performed His atoning work, the fact is that the flawlessness of the world of Genesis 1:31- 2:25 was at best fragile and vulnerable. The closing words of Genesis 2 are an omen of bad things to come: “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Genesis 2:26).

All the things that our fertile imagination can conjure up from that statement were foreign to the thinking of the unfallen first couple. If you had been able to appear to them and say, “Do you know you have no clothes on?” they might have replied, “Clothes, what are clothes?” and be surprised that to our compromised minds that sounded funny. But so fundamental was that ultimate picture of a lustless society that Genesis uses it as the springboard to mark the change which took place once the forbidden fruit had been tasted.

“They heard the voice of the Lord God... and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (Genesis 3:8-11).

Before the Fall, nakedness was a fact but it was not remarkable. There was nothing to make it so. But after the Fall nakedness was the response of a bad conscience towards God. It epitomized all that might now go wrong in practice, once the protection of innocence had been breached.

Trace the precipitous decline of the human race from that point on;

1. The morbid awareness of nakedness provoked shame in the presence of the Creator (3:10).
2. The discovery of the nakedness called for an explanation which was either excuse- making, or a downright rebellious transfer of responsibility from the sinner to the Sinless One; “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (3:12).
3. The fallen couple became parents of children, one of whom offered a rebellious sacrifice, and when it was rejected, committed the first murder; “To Cain and to his offering God had not respect. Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. Cain talked with Abel his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him, “(4:5,8).
4. Among the descendants of Cain was found the first recorded bigamist, who seems to have slain a man so as to possess himself of his wife; “Lamech took two wives. Lamech said unto his wives. Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for injuring me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold” (4:19,24, modified as in NIV). God might offer some protection to Cain, but Lamech boasted that he needed no such guarding: anyone who attacked him would fare far worse than Cain!
5. In the other fruitful line, that of Seth, the life of an exceptionally righteous man was so threatened by sinners that only God’s hiding him could save him from their evil purposes; “Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him” (5:22,24). If we want to know why he was so imperilled, then Jude tells us, “Enoch prophesied of these, saying. Behold, the Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14,15).
6. Enoch prophesied in the spirit of his great-grandson Noah, whose life was so contrasted with that of his contemporaries that he is described as “perfect” (6:8,9).
7. From the isolated examples of notorious sinners summarized above, we pass to a picture of a world which had become hopelessly contaminated with well-nigh universal corruption, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (6:5,7).
8. But this is far from being the whole story. From innocence yielding to temptation through to hiding from God, to rebellious utterance, wilful wrong offering and consequent murder, to violence in the service of profligacy, we have gone on to corruption and rejection of the message of God which is wholesale and nearly universal. The Deluge may have been the only way of bringing matters under control, but it was only a palliative. Even if there were to be another Flood it could only cut out a canker from an infested body.

“The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done (8:21).

At the time there was no one alive younger than 100. That statement about the heart of man is a generic picture of what the human heart is like. When the next generation arose it would be inwardly just like the one which had been eliminated. It could no more be cured by drowning than by the Pharisees’ surgical washing of the hands:

“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed;

adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:15-23).

All this means that we have traced a spread of actual evil through the human race which began with the first yielding to temptation by the original human pair; which burgeoned in the period between that Fall and the Flood; which was only temporarily stayed by that Deluge; and which left on the scene a man who, though ‘perfect’ as compared with his contemporaries, was the father of sons, one of whom was apparently guilty of exploiting Noah’s inebriation in lascivious pleasure at his exposure, so that Ham (or was it Canaan?) came under a curse because of his lustful pleasure in his father’s (or grandfather’s?) exposure;

“He said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (9:25).

This event would seem to be long enough after the Deluge itself for a new generation to have come into being, and to have vindicated what God said concerning the heart of man being evil from his youth up (8:21).

It is not necessary to detail the endless sequences of lapse into gross communal sin which afflicted mankind after the Flood. But we have only to mention the conspiracy of Babel (11: 1-9); the profligacy of Sodom (13:13, 18:1 - 19:31); even the deceitfulnesses of Abraham’s kin - Jacob, Laban, Reuben, and the like; to fill in our thinking, as it were, until we come to the people of God themselves. Their persistent and repeated waywardness in the Wilderness on the way to Canaan (Exodus 16 and 17; Numbers 20,25 and more); the chaotic declensions in the days of the Judges; and the terminal conditions which arose in the days of the Kings, all bear witness to the deep-rooted corruption of their hearts;

“Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. The LORD God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chronicles 36:14-16).

This is not to say that Israel was peculiar in its corruptions; rather, that it was particularly conspicuous and culpable because it continued to indulge those corruptions in spite of the favours and the enlightenment and the rebukes which God, through Moses and the prophets, caused to come upon it. Israel illustrates the worst in our human dispositions, that, no matter what steps are taken to correct them, continue to assert themselves regardless. Israel witnessed what is a pervasive truth concerning mankind as a whole;

“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is... The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:5-9).

In which Jeremiah anticipates the judgment passed by the Lord Jesus Himself, already quoted here. And, of course, the judgment of the Lord Jesus is confirmed in the no less far-reaching picture painted by Paul:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you beforehand, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

With this I leave the question posed at the beginning of this section, “What happened to the human race?” in the knowledge that massive further evidence is available to leave our desperate plight in no doubt. Without God to help there can be no deliverance from sin, let alone from the death to which it gives rise.

“He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:18-21).

All I have so far written is material which convinces me that the Scriptures are much more deeply involved in deliverance from sin than they are in the quite secondary deliverance from death, for which we all long. The latter cannot be had without the former, and it is on the former that the picture of the Saviour in the

Gospels is concentrated. And it is at this point that Paul's picture of the means of human redemption comes to the fore and demands elucidation;

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin(,) in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 7:24-8:8).

What the law failed to do was to provide a basis of righteousness for sinners. It failed in this because the nature of 'flesh' stood in its way. And the obstruction offered by flesh was that it would not willingly conform to the standards the Law had laid down:

I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me, but to perform that which is good I find not... I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:16-24).

Paul is speaking of the inmost need of a sin-bound body, which he is unable in himself to satisfy. He did not make himself that way, it was not his fault that he was so born; but faced with the choice of pretending to be strong and righteous enough to do in his own power what the righteousness of God required, and papering over the cracks of his obvious failure, he had learned the hard way that this is not what God requires, and not what God will be satisfied with. There was another way, which he would see clearly when, faced with the self-emptying righteousness of his Lord, he ceased to kick against the goad, and resolved to follow the Lord Jesus rather than withstand Him.

The Lord Jesus had already taught that lesson to Peter, though it would be some time before Peter would be ready to apply it and practise it; here are the stages through which Peter must go to learn the lesson. The argument is paraphrased:

1. “Peter, who do you think I am?” (Matthew 16:15).
2. “Lord, you are the anointed King, the Son of the Living God!” (16:16).
3. “Peter, on the rock of that declaration I will found my Congregation, which even the powers of death will not be able to hold in bondage” (16:18,19).
4. “...but before that day can come I must be crucified, dead, and buried, for only from this can the Resurrection to Life emerge” (16:21).
5. “No Lord, you must never allow anything like that to happen to you!” (16:23).
6. “It is the only way Peter, for me and you and all of us. Stop standing in front of me and seeking to hinder me, and get behind me, where you belong, and follow me. You must accept the Cross as your own proper way to salvation, so take up a cross every one of you, and come with me to the place where men are crucified!” (16:23-26).

It was not Peter's fault that he was born the way he was, but it would have been his grievous and fatal fault if he had declined to confess and deplore the nature he bore. Had he aggressively sought to block the

Lord's path to Golgotha, and continued to confront his Lord's call to self-denial and cross-bearing with a continued "This shall not be unto Thee!" He could have found no salvation. But when he ceased to be Satan and fell in line behind his Lord, then salvation was his for the faithful continuance in asking.

There is no mistaking the Lord's metaphor. When His enemies condemned Him to crucifixion, most of the Twelve in fact forsook Him and fled, and the one who remained held on to his fragile faith only while there remained hope that the Lord would still use His power to walk free from His enemies. But when Peter saw that this was not to be, his as yet false conception that Messiah must not yield to His enemies broke his heart, and, three times repudiating any connection with his Master, he saw the Lord's saddened eyes upon him, and "went out and wept bitterly."

There is not that uncomplicated one-to-one relationship between baptism and conversion which one might like to think. Doubtless all the Apostles had been baptized; John, son of Zebedee and Andrew at least by John the Baptist.¹ The earliest apostles, in their earliest days, harboured mistaken notions opposing the need for the Lord Jesus' death. There were stages in their conversion, and in Peter's case at least a vital stage was still lacking in him when the Lord said to him at the Last Supper, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you (all) that he may sift you (all) as wheat; but I have prayed for thee (in particular); and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-34). What began with his sobbing repentance (22:62) must have been given substance by the appearance of the risen Lord, and specially so, for all of them save Judas Iscariot, by the instruction they received before the Ascension (Acts 1:1-11). So Peter's understanding of self-denial and taking up the cross had, during the conversation in Caesarea, a long way to go. Doubtless the same was true of the others too.

In fact the best understanding of the death of Jesus before He actually died is that displayed by the malefactor on the Cross by His side:

"Dost thou not fear God - (this to his impenitent fellow) - seeing thou art in the same condemnation? We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom! And Jesus said to him, Verily I say to thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise" ² (Luke 23:40-43).

The true understanding of sin to which this repentant sinner came as he compared his own proper punishment side by side with the affliction of a Saviour Who had 'done nothing amiss', should prepare us all for our own participation in the benefits of the crucifixion of our Lord. Consider this compelling catena of passages:

1. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24 as above. See also 10:38; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27).
2. "If we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified (together) with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that hath died is justified from sin." (Romans 6:5-7).
3. "We preach Christ crucified... unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23,24).
4. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).
5. "I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God, for I have been crucified (together)³ with Christ, yet I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:19,20).
6. "O foolish Galatians, who bath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified?" (Galatians 3:1).
7. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these... They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:19-24).

8. "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).
9. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of man... becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him." (Philippians 2:5-11).
10. "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered... having been made perfect He became to all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:8,9).

The Cross, by whatever name we choose to designate it, is at the very centre of our understanding of the Atonement. Historically, the crucifixion is something which was done to our Lord by sinners, but which He accepted of His own free will:

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep... I lay down my life for the sheep... Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:11,15, 17, 8).

And whatever the Lord and Paul said about Jesus' death, represented as a ransom (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, 1 Timothy 2:6), neither of them (in these passages at least) pauses to develop the substitutionary metaphor, nor is that the purpose of the passages. In the two former the Lord is concerned with renouncing any claims to self-importance: He did not come to be afforded honours, nor to encourage His disciples to do so, but at His own high cost to give all in the services of others. In the last passage God's concern for the salvation of men is shown to be so great that everyone who is willing is comprehended within the grace shown by the Lord in dying for them. And in the passage concerning the Good Shepherd the Lord showed that He was not compelled to yield to the evil designs of men, but did so voluntarily, and for this reason earned His Father's good pleasure.

We must take up in connection with our Lord what we have already affirmed of Paul and Peter. Neither of these two was responsible for the nature he bore; their heredity from Adam and Eve provided this. But each was responsible for what he would do when called to repent. And Peter was told, and Paul came to recognize, that the right thing to do with one's fleshly nature is to crucify it: "to deny oneself and take up one's cross and follow the Lord." So for the Lord Himself; the nature He bore was inborn in Him, and neither blame nor guilt attached to Him on that account. But the right thing to do, for the One so innocently afflicted with "the likeness of flesh of sin" was to see to it that "flesh of sin" was humbled and brought to nought.

So the Lord Jesus accepted the office of becoming an offering for sin, and in His own flesh condemned the sin to which He had never yielded. This was the only way; temptation must be resisted whenever it came upon Him, but this was not enough. He must win every battle, but there was only one way to win the war, and that was to accept the divine wish, and at the appointed time "die for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

What was accomplished by that removed all obstacles to the heavenly exaltation of the Lord, as I have shown from Philippians 2:5-10 and Hebrews 5:5-10. Having emptied Himself, and sealed that process by allowing His body to be done to death on the Cross, the Lord had removed from His mortal body all that could have resisted the will of God, and made possible His exaltation. God knew well that, as Paul put it, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Any glory which men might pay to the Lord thenceforth would be ascribed by the glorified Son as truly belonging to the God, His Father, who had sent Him. The Lord had pin-pointed the source from which men's sins sprang, and had removed it. By death He had "brought to nought him that hath the power of death, that is the devil," and had fulfilled in reality what Moses had done for Israel in type, when they had been incurably smitten by the serpents in the wilderness;

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14,15).

“The Lord said to Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one that is bitten, when he looketh on it shall live. Moses (did so) and if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of bronze, he lived” (Numbers 21:8,9).

On the literal scale, Israel had sinned mortally, and nothing they could do could save their lives. Their only hope lay in a simple appeal to God’s mercy, and when this was granted it took the form of exhibiting a model of the serpents which afflicted them, exposed to ‘execution’ on the pole. If they looked at this in faith they were saying in effect, “What is beyond our power to defeat, God has shown that He can conquer. We put our trust in Him!” And in so doing they were healed for their faith’s sake. The Lord Jesus then comes on the scene, and what He says is tantamount to this:--

You are mortally stricken because of your sins	- Just as Israel was in the wilderness Just as theirs was.
You are incapable of delivering yourselves. Your fate can be averted by your faith in the conquest of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross	Just as they were by gazing at the transfixed serpent.
But the conquest by Jesus was a reality,	whereas that shown by Moses was a prophetic symbol only.

In fact: - “He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We can sum up the triumph of Jesus very quickly. Though afflicted with the disposition towards sin which He shared with us all, He resisted temptation whenever it assailed Him. But each victory won a battle only, and the war continued for so long as the fleshly nature remained alive. To lay down His life while still sinless was the Lord Jesus’ only way to final and unchallengeable victory, a victory which was achieved when He “became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” The subsequent high exaltation of the Lord Jesus, now for ever freed from the impulses which characterize out flesh, qualifies Him in every regard to be Priest for His own people, conqueror of the nations when He returns, and purging the world of all unrighteousness and its consequences before He presents the entirely perfected work to His Father. Only in this way was His perfection to be attained, as alt four uses of the word ‘to perfect’ about Him in the New Testament convincingly show:

“Behold I cast out demons, and I do cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:22).

“It became (God), m bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

“Though he was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect. He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8,9).

“The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath, which was since the Saw, maketh the Son who is consecrated (= perfected) for evermore” (Hebrews 7:28).

So what do we do in our helpless thralldom to sin?

1. We admit our own helplessness to overcome in our own strength.

2. We accept the message of surrender given by the Lord in His embracing of the Cross, seeing in this His own completed victory over sin.

3. We associate ourselves with His crucifixion, set out in terms already referred to:

- "Then said Jesus, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

- (in association with our baptism) "our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:5-7).

"The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you before(hand), as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:19-24).

- "I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Not, we should add, with His crucifixion only, but also with that prelude to the crucifixion provided by the circumcision carried out on the infant Christ as prescribed by the Law of Moses, itself a symbol of the renunciation of the flesh;

- "in Him ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11,12).

- "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 2:2-4).

4. Thus we go in symbol through the total yielding to God which the Son of God accomplished in fact.

5. Though in practice we all fail to fulfil the requirements of the course on which we have entered, the Lord, now perfected and our Priest at the right hand of God, stands ready to respond to faithful prayers addressed to His Father in His Name. Indeed, this is set out as the culmination of the work of Atonement in not a few passages of Scripture, with which we shall close this exposition:

"Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage... wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like 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. For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:14-18).

"Seeing that we have a great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16),

"All things work together for good to those who love God, the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified... He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that

died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8:28-34).

So this presentation of the doctrine of the atonement is that, starting with our human infirmity which arose through the offence of our first parents, and with the firm intention of God that His creation should attain the ends for which it was designed, we go on through the universal failure of all save One, and the continual reminders of the exceeding sinfulness of sin to the ultimate victory of Him “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” His victory over sin proceeded through numerous battles against manifold temptations to the ultimate and absolute triumph He won, by completing His total surrender to His Father by yielding His body to death. In this He became our example, leading us to our acceptance of the lesson of His work in our baptisms, so that the most compelling picture of what we do in becoming His disciples is that we follow Him to the Cross, bearing our own crosses in symbolic slaying and burial of our flesh “with its affections and lusts.” But He was more than our example; He was and is also our Leader and our Helper. His own future is secure in that, free from all human infirmity, He is now “made perfect;” and such a future He has provided for His faithful servants, who are taught:

“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung. that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:8-14). 4

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ENDNOTES

1. We do not know that there was a general requirement to baptize the Baptist’s disciples when they came to Christ, for the example of Acts 19:1-7 is an isolated one, concerning very imperfectly instructed (however sincere) followers of the Lord Jesus who clearly recognized the defects in their Christian education and desired to set matters right. There was a chain of manifestations marking the progress of the gospel to various categories of disciples: Jews at Pentecost (Acts 1), Samaritans after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8):

Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10-11); and now this small company in Ephesus. But it seems that watersheds like these were accompanied by miraculous manifestations of the Spirit which by no means represented the ordinary course of events. Even at Pentecost it is not reported that the 3000 converts did receive any miraculous visitation.

2. I adopt the ‘misplaced comma’ explanation here, because it eliminates the problem that Jesus was not in ‘paradise’ (whatever that may prove to mean) on that day, because it has the malefactor well-informed on the matter of the Lord’s future kingdom, and because it allows of a wonderfully sympathetic reply from the Lord; Remember you, and let you die in doubt? I will tell you to-day, and let you die in peace. You will be with me when paradise is established on the earth!”

3. ‘Crucified together’ is used to render the Greek verb *sustauroO*, co-crucify. The two passages quoted about the co-crucifixion of the believer with his Lord can be compared with the three others where the word is used about the malefactors literally crucified by the side of the Lord (Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:32, John 19:32).

4. Quotations broadly follow those of the Authorized King James Version. I have modernized a few words, and occasionally used the English Revised Version when it seemed to make a meaning clearer.