

# Circular Letter No. 177

## May/June 1999

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## Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving Greeting

The Bible never questions the existence of angels but simply states the fact. The only things we know for sure about them are that they do God's bidding, they do not marry and they sing. A poet speculated that when they sing for God they sing Beethoven but when they sing for themselves they sing Mozart. Of course it is possible that they sing music we have not yet heard. Only two angels are mentioned by name, Gabriel who told Mary about Jesus' birth and Michael who came to Daniel and was called by him the prince of the people of Israel. Michael is reckoned to be the greatest of the archangels. We don't know if all the angels are male, this seems unlikely as marriage is not mentioned in connection with them. Angel means messenger and that they play a vital part in God's arrangements there can be no doubt.

In the Old Testament Hagar and Ishmael were saved from death in the desert when an angel roused Hagar from her weeping and pointed out a well of water. When Abraham was about to slay his beloved son Isaac it was an angel that stayed his hand and drew attention to the ram caught in the thicket that was killed instead of Isaac. The angel of God went before Israel's camp when they were fleeing from the Egyptians and with a cloud came between them and their enemies, giving the Israelites light and the Egyptians darkness. Balaam had a particularly unnerving experience with an angel which he probably thought about twice before telling his friends. The ass on which Balaam was riding saw the angel first and stopped in her tracks and Balaam beat her for it. Then she squeezed herself against the wall crushing her master's foot in so doing and he beat her again. When she finally fell down under his onslaught, God kindly opened the mouth of the ass and she said to Balaam "What have I done to you that you should beat me three times?" I dare say it was then Balaam's turn to collapse and after further conversation with his "dumb" friend Balaam's eyes were opened and he saw the angel too, who by this time was probably smiling as well. Gideon became a military commander rather unwillingly at the behest of an angel, in order to rescue Israel from the power of Midian. Gideon's battle tactics were commando style exploiting surprise and psychological weapons. Something the Israelis are famous for to this day. Elijah who is described in the Concordance as "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced" was enabled to travel for forty days and forty nights on cakes that an angel baked for him on a fire of coals.

In the New Testament angels were prominent players in the drama of Jesus' short life. They announced His birth to Mary and the shepherds. An angel spoke to Joseph reassuring him about Mary. Angels sang in the fields of Bethlehem for joy at Jesus' birth. Angels ministered to Him during His temptations in the wilderness and strengthening Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. An angel rolled away

the stone of His tomb and told His friends of His resurrection and after Jesus had risen angels encouraged the disciples.

An angel led Peter out of prison and one stood by Paul throughout his shipwreck off the island of Malta.

We don't see angels these days ~ or perhaps some of us do and don't tell anybody. But they are obviously still about their work in the world and those that are dear to God are probably protected and guided more than they ever realize. If the angels care and support of Jesus is anything to go by they must be entrusted with the special protection of those who are alone or in difficulties.

David's psalm tells us that "The angel of the Lord encampeth around about them that fear him, and delivereth them." The Book of Common Prayer has a beautiful collect "God who hast ordained and constituted the services of angles and men in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that, as thy holy angels always do thee service in heaven so, by thy appointment, they may succour and defend us on earth." Amen to that.

The mysteriousness of angels and their power has also inspired poets. Francis Thompson writes:

The angles keep their ancient places-  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangéd faces  
That miss the many splendoured thing.

With love to all, Helen Brady

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## **Letter from Brother and Sister Parry:-**

Dear Helen, Eileen, Ray and Russell, Greetings with Love in the Name of Jesus.

We are grateful for the Circular Letter for March/April 1999, No. 176 which contains our definite and scriptural views which have been in dispute for so many years by people who support the false Clauses in their Statement of Faith.

Having read Sister Helen's introduction on what has been achieved through William Tyndale's efforts of translation whereby we are able to read the Scriptures in our own language and interpret Scripture with Scripture by correct use of its context and discriminating where necessary, I marvel why people prefer to accept much of the false theories and interpretations of men and make them a Basis of Fellowship when the foundational basis is The Holy Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone on whose Sacrifice and teaching the Spiritual Temple is being built. To stray from the true line of the foundation and Cornerstone laid in Zion by God Himself, is to reject the fact that Jesus was Elect and precious and the True Lamb of God without blemish of flesh and without imputed sin in Adam.

Everything in our Circular Letter confirms our belief and Faith and the overthrow of those people's views which differ. Even Dr. Edersheim supports our beliefs and teaching on the Sacrifice of Christ in the matter of "Sacrifices: Their Order and Their Meaning." Which has been put on record in our Circular Letter to prove we are not alone in our views of Jesus as the true substitute for Adam and all who were constituted sinners in him in a legal sense and not because of their physical nature.

We compliment Brother Ray Gregory's address and also Brother Ray's and Sister Eileen's stand against the weakness of responsible members of the Erdington Christadelphian Ecclesia who were unable to produce one member to prove that Ray and Eileen were violating the faith once delivered to the Saints.

What can I call this position of Christadelphianism?

Spiritual Bankruptcy? Yes, sad to say it, but God is merciful, always allowing room for sincere repentance, but as John Baptist said, “Fruit meet for repentance” must be displayed.

My advice therefore is read our literature on what we believe, and do not resort to evil surmising.

Brother and Sister P. Parry. Nazarene Fellowship.

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## Treasure in Earthen Vessels

A leading principle of God is “First that which is natural” (1 Corinthians 15:46) and our nature is of the substance of the visible material universe. There are evidently two reasons why we are “of the earth, earthy;” 1). Because God is Spirit and requires to try or test us first, and  
2). That we should be lowly and Himself glorified.

Scriptures on the glory of God are too numerous to quote but one or two, e.g. Philippians 2:11, “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” 1 Corinthians 1:27,29,31 where we read that, “God has chosen...weak things... that no flesh should glory in His presence... that, as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

Our leading thought is that for these reasons we have treasure in earthen vessels as we read from 2 Corinthians 4:6,7, God “commendeth the light to shine out of darkness” and has “shone in our hearts... But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.”

As children of a Father we are happy to accede to this. For our sakes even Jesus, great though He was, was made “for a little while lower than the angels” just as we are, that He might afterwards be “crowned with glory and honour” (Hebrews 2:7).

Our nature is naturally dark, though we are light in the Lord and walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:5). But the glory of God and of Christ is that He had light as well as life in Himself - as the Word made flesh: John 1:4 reads, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” And then we read (Verse 14), “and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Lord Jesus in the hour of His trial, asked His Father to glorify His (God’s) name, the reply: “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again” which God did in the crucifixion of the Son and subsequently.

At this point it may be needful for us to realize Jesus was not in competition with us and did not need “a level playing field” (Excuse the topical reference). Rather was He obtaining a victory for us on our behalf and in our place and by the power of God. He was the Shepherd of the sheep, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Captain of our salvation.

Also He trod a much harder path against the toughest opposition, without sin; the law being “Weak through the flesh,” He came “in the likeness of sin’s flesh... and condemned sin (while) in the flesh” which could not be done outside of flesh of man wherein sin had been reigning supreme until Jesus came.

He was worthy, we only relatively so and that by grace, the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8). He did a “finished” (John 17:4, 19:30) work at great cost of suffering “having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1). He was indeed worthy and is worthily lauded with the chorus of a multitude of voices singing “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power... (Revelation 4:11). And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood...” Revelation 5:9.

The earthen vessel in the hands of the Great Potter was not marred and did not break. The treasure thus obtained, it is our privilege to have “in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power” thus displayed “may be of God and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Brother Stanley Jelfs.

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## Things Temporal & Things Eternal

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are living in a period of atomic and aerial research mixed with fantastic ideas of space-ships and voyages to the moon and other planets of the solar system.

Some of the things that are being put in children’s papers and national newspapers, representing what may be in the future, are just fantastic ideas from the imaginative brains of those responsible, and though they are meant for entertainment, there are some scientifically minded persons who think seriously of the possibilities of such things.

Sad to say, how many of us have had the privilege of seeing the many wonders of the planet on which we live - much less those planets by which we are surrounded? No doubt many of us would like to see in reality these many wonders, but will have to be content with mere pictures and descriptions as both age and money are against us.

But it has always struck me, but more so in the last two years, that we who seem to be the least likely of seeing the wonders of this planet and probably other planets, will enjoy that privilege before the scientists and the wise of this world. They rely on the things that are seen to reach their objective while “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” 2 Corinthians 4:18, for we walk by faith, not by sight. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory - for all things are for your sakes.”

We are all familiar with these words of Paul quoted from 2 Corinthians, “All things are for your sakes,” says Paul and he emphasizes this fact more so in 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, “Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” Again in Romans 4:13, “For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

We also are Abraham’s seed, and heirs therefore of the same promise. The wise of this world give the lie to their so-called Christian faith, and heaven-going ideas, by seeking now, by material means the as yet unexplored realms of space. “Canst thou by searching find out God? The answer to this is yes - in the limited sense of His revealed Will and Character in Holy Writ. But to search for Him or the magnitude of His Creation by the use of material inventions such as space-ships, is a manifest token that there is no faith in the minds and hearts of those so employed. For, says the writer to the Hebrews, “faith is the substance of things hoped for.” Those who have the true faith are content to wait patiently for its fulfilment; they are not of those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. “All power is given me in heaven and in earth,” says Jesus.

God hath spoken unto us by His Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things. We have hearkened unto His voice and become joint-heirs with Christ. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” Revelation 21:7. This is the height of our calling, Brethren and Sister, and Paul exhorts us to strive to make our calling and election sure. In Paul we have a man who has been allowed the privilege of a glimpse into the future - even paradise, or the third heaven, when he heard unspeakable words which it was not possible for a man to utter or, as the margin implies, “speak of freely.”

Yet no doubt there is in Paul's epistles evidence of some of the things he heard and saw. 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? There is no reason why He should not; such ideas to the contrary have been removed from our minds by a more perfect understanding of the Holy Scriptures which are able to make those who rightly divide them, wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

There can be no doubt that prayer similar to that used by Paul on behalf of the Ephesians (1:15-23) has contributed much toward this, and shows to what a great and exalted position we stand related.

In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul gives hint of the fact of his being caught away to visions of the future and he also mentions facts which must be rejected by those who support the doctrines of men who assert that possession by the Holy Spirit is impossible in present true believers, "O blessed are the eyes that see the living way, to grasp the glorious prize of everlasting day."

When we hear some of the varied expositions of why Christ died, one begins to wonder why He was ever allowed to live. Thanks be to God that we know why He was born and that by His life of righteousness and His willing sacrifice He has been given a name which is above every name. We give thanks to Him that our new Brethren and Sisters have realized and appreciated these things and can read Colossians 1 with a better understanding.

Our faith is a sound one; we are not looking for things which God has not promised; our work if faithful, will concern the teaching of the nations in the way of righteousness and we shall doubtless see and experience great things.

Jesus speaking to Nathaniel, declares "Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." These are the things which are eternal. We look to the dispensation of the fullness of times when God shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth... even in Him. in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ" Ephesians 1.

Temporal things have their place, our Father knows our necessities but we must seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness and the temporal things will be added. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Brother Phil Parry.

Faith is required at Thy hands, and a sincere life; not height of understanding, nor depth of the mysteries of God. See 2 Corinthians 5:7.

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## **The Enrolling and The Award**

These notes arise as a result of a perplexity. The writer at one time believed with the Christadelphians that righteous and unrighteous dead would be raised from the ground simultaneously to undergo examination, after which the righteous should be transformed, or "raised incorruptible," and the unrighteous should be dismissed to find death "among the nations." but this view makes it necessary that we should "explain" Paul's own explanation! "Listen, I will tell you God's hidden purpose!" wrote Paul (1 Corinthians 15:51), and he straightway proceeds to show that the "dead will rise immortal" "and we also shall be transformed" in a moment, at the last trumpet call.

Those words seem plain enough, in fact Paul is making plain something which before was kept secret. But the Christadelphian view requires us to suppose that that explanation needs itself to be explained. There is the perplexity referred to.

If the dead will indeed rise immortal at the last trumpet call, where is there room for that judgment of which Paul writes in Romans 14, "So then, each one of us will have to render account of himself to God"?

Some time ago we announced that we were going through the New Testament especially for the purpose of marking and collating every passage bearing upon the topic of judgment and resurrection. That was accomplished, the passages were separately extracted and classified and still that perplexity remained. But the solution came suddenly one day, after much searching enquiry.

And here we will stray somewhat from our course in order to give counsel to such as desire to know the ways and will of God more perfectly, counsel which we with you also need to be constantly given lest we should begin to lean upon others.

To attain to a knowledge of God needs more than the searching of the Scriptures. The Pharisees searched the Scriptures, yet rejected the Messiah. Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures but needed to be guided to Christ by two of His disciples. And we have the words of Christ that no man comes to Him except the Father draw him, but also His assurance that if any man will do the will of God he shall learn of the doctrine. From these things it is evident that we must address ourselves in prayer to God, asking that He shall open the eyes of our understanding\* (see footnote) and guide us to the knowledge we need. Perseverance must follow and we must be prepared to take great pains to arrive at precious truths. Diamonds are not found on the seashore, and I would urge the frequent use of pen and paper in order to record the passages as they are sought and examined. These things curiously, have the same initial and might be stated as the five "P's" - Prayer, Painstaking, Perseverance, Pen and Paper, and if it is some Perplexity that causes these five things to be used successfully the seventh "P" will be Praise to God.

Therefore, dear reader, keep in mind that what follows is not intended as instruction for you; it is merely to show what conclusions have been reached by the writer, who is of no account in the matter and would send these articles out anonymously if it were not for the fact that anonymity in this kind of writing is distasteful to the careful reader. If these articles have the effect of causing the reader to examine these scriptural topics for him or herself the aim of the writer will have been accomplished.

It is believed that all the relevant passages have been dealt with in the following articles. Any omissions will be thankfully received. Questions are also invited for our mutual benefit. The translations of the Scriptures which have been used are, for the New Testament, the "Twentieth Century," and for the Old Testament, the "Revised Version," except where otherwise stated.

The Book of Life. When a man is united to Christ, which happens when he is baptized into Christ, his name is written in heaven: "Rejoice" said Christ, "that your names have been enrolled in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

A name once enrolled in the Book of Life may have to be blotted out and David wrote of certain, "Let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be written with the righteous" (Psalm 69:28). To him who conquers Christ promises "I will not strike his name out of the Book of Life, but I will own him before my Father and before His angels" (Revelation 3:5). This public acknowledgement may happen after the resurrection, but we shall see that it happens also in heaven prior to the Resurrection. There is coming the time and that quickly, when "everyone that shall be found written in the Book (of Life?) shall be delivered" (Daniel 12:1). (See later for remarks on this passage).

Previous to the resurrection will take place a judgment. I say a judgment because there is more than one judgment spoken of in the Scriptures. Christ once spoke of those who are "accounted worthy to attain to that other world, and the resurrection from the dead..." (Luke 20:35). Now it is obvious that this judgment as to whether a certain disciple is thought worthy to rise from the dead at that "age" must be made before he is actually raised. That passage concerns the dead. The living are referred to similarly in Luke 21:36, "Pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all the things that shall come to pass and to stand (be set, or appear) before the Son of Man." (A.V.)

The worthy will escape by being taken, the unworthy will be left - "on that night, I tell you, of two men upon the same bed, one shall be taken and the other left; of two women grinding together, one shall be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:34,35). This judgment as to who is worthy to be taken must take place before the event which happens at the last trumpet, the instant the dead are raised.

As to whether a man is worthy to be raised when his Lord returns (or taken to meet Him if he be still living) depends upon whether or not his name is still in the Book of Life. If he conquers his name will remain there (Revelation 3:3-5). If he "keeps in mind" the "story of My endurance" - "I will keep you in the hour of trial that is about to come upon the whole world, the hour that will test all who are living upon earth" (Revelation 3:10).

The Thessalonian brethren were being persecuted and assuming their faithfulness Paul wrote, "These persecutions... will result in your being reckoned worthy of God's Kingdom" - (2 Thessalonians 1:5). This reckoning precedes the Resurrection. "Only those whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life" shall enter the Holy City. (Revelation 21:27). "All whose names were not found written in the Book of Life" are raised "when the thousand years are ended" Revelation 20:7-15. Those who are raised to "reign with Christ a thousand years" therefore are those whose names are in that Book, and this agrees with the Scripture that says that "Blessed and holy will be he who shares in that first resurrection." (Revelation 20:6).

The conclusion we have reached then, is that a man's name is enrolled in the Book of Life when he is baptized into Christ. Eternal life is a gift from God and the writing in heaven of his name is his title to Eternal Life. A believer "hath eternal life" now in this sense. Eternal life is a gift from God; it cannot be earned, but it can be forfeited by unworthy conduct. If a believer's name remain in the Book of Life when Christ returns he will be gathered either from among the dead ones or from among the nations to meet Him. If his name have been blotted out, he will be left among the nations, if alive, or among the dead ones till the thousand years are expired, if he be dead, but the judgment as to whether a believer is worthy or unworthy of his name being kept in the Book of Life must take place before Christ returns.

**Present Punishments and Training** It must not be overlooked that believers are being disciplined at the present time, sometimes receiving punishment.

"My child, think not lightly of the Lord's discipline, do not despond when He rebukes you" (Hebrews 12:5). "God disciplines us for our true good, to enable us to share His Holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). "Therefore I am laying her upon a bed of sickness... unless they repent... I will also put her children to death; and all the Churches shall know that I am he who looks into the hearts and souls of men." and I will give to each one of you what his life deserves." (Revelation 2:23). "For the man who eats and drinks brings a judgment upon himself by his eating and drinking, when he does not discern the body. That is why so many among you are weak and ill and why some are sleeping. But if we judge ourselves rightly, we should not be judged- Yet in being judged by the Lord we are undergoing discipline so that we may not have judgement passed upon us with the rest of the world." (1 Corinthians 11:29-32).

So then here is another judgment. One that is running concurrently with the life of each believer. Peter wrote in his first epistle (1:6), "you have suffered for the moment somewhat from various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, a thing far more precious than gold, which is perishable yet has to be tested by fire, may win praise... at the appearing of... Christ," (1 Peter 1:6). And he wrote more fully of these fiery trials later on in the same epistle; "Do not be astonished at the fiery trials that you are passing through to test you as though something strange were happening to you... For the time has come for judgment to begin with the House of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who reject God's Good News?" (4:12-28). .

**An Example of Judgment at a Distance.** We have shown that judgment is passed on the believer before Christ returns to earth. That judgment is therefore passed in the absence of the believer (in the majority of cases they are in the grave). An example is found in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, "I have already passed judgment, just as if I had been present, upon the man who has acted in this way. I have decided, having been present in spirit at your meetings when the power of the Lord Jesus was with us, to deliver such a man as this over to Satan that what is sensual in him may be destroyed, so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord."

This may help us to understand the greater judgment by Christ in heaven. As a matter of fact, Paul here speaks of his judging such a man, “What have I to do with judging those outside the Church? Is it not for you to judge those who are within the Church, while God judges those that are outside?” (verses 12 & 13).

**The Consummation.** In those two well known passages we read of what transpires when Christ returns, “Those of us who are still living at the coming of the Lord will not anticipate those who have passed to their rest. For with a loud summons, with the shout of an archangel and with the trumpet-call of God, the Lord Himself will come down from heaven. Then those who died in union with Christ shall rise first, and afterwards we who are still living shall be caught up in the clouds with them, to meet the Lord in the air.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

“Listen, I will tell you God’s hidden purpose. We shall not all have passed to our rest, but we shall all be transformed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet-call; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise immortal and we also shall be transformed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). The dead rise immortal and the living are changed as Christ descends from heaven, in a flash, and then the recently living and the recently dead are together caught up to meet Him in the air. In the Emphatic Diaglott “then we, the living, who are left over, shall at the same time with them be caught away in clouds.” These plain words the writer now accepts in their plain and natural sense.

1 John 3:2 may have some bearing upon the matter - “What we do know is that when it is revealed, we shall be like Christ; because we shall see Him as He is.” But I am uncertain as to what is intended to be understood by the “because.”

**The Regal Awards.** There is another judgement to which we have not yet referred. It is on earth and all the accepted will attend. “Each will receive his own reward in proportion to his own labour... the quality of each man’s work will become known for the Day will make it plain; because that Day is to be ushered in with fire and the fire itself will test the quality of every man’s work. If any man’s work... still remains, he will gain a reward. If any man’s work is burnt up, he will suffer loss; though he himself will escape, but only as one who has passed through fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

That seems plain enough. Although one’s works may be burnt up yet he escapes that destruction. All mentioned here receive reward in proportion to his own labour. None of the rejected appear at this tribunal. This Judgment Seat does not concern itself with Life and Death but with the bestowal of awards for faithful service.

“We shall all stand before the Bar of God... So then, each one of us will have to render account of himself to God” (Romans 14:1-13). “Let us then cease to judge one another.” in reading this passage notice the phrases, “passing judgment on their scruples” (verse 1), “who are you that you should pass judgment on the servant of another?” (verse 4, etc).

All this is in accordance with 1 Corinthians 4:5, “It is the Lord who is my Judge. Therefore do not pass judgment before the time, but wait till the Lord comes. He will throw light upon what is now dark and obscure and will reveal the motives in man’s minds and then every one will receive due praise from God.” The apostle speaks of everyone at the tribunal receiving due praise. This is not the place of punishment.

Then we come to the exhortation to Timothy to “proclaim the message” and he naturally enough prefaces this exhortation with a reminder of that Day when such preaching shall be considered, when Jesus Christ “will one day judge the living and dead” saints, and he concludes with a reference to his own warfare? “As for me... the crown of righteousness (he says not “crown of life”) awaits me, which the Lord will give me on that day” (2 Timothy 4:1-8). Paul elsewhere refers to his crown. “What crown shall we have to boast of in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming, if it be not you?” (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20). Again; “You have a right to be proud of us as we shall be proud of you, on the day of our Lord Jesus.” (2 Corinthians 1:14).

Paul again refers to that time when each will render account, when he writes, “Obey your leaders, and submit to their control, for they are watching over your souls, as men who will have to render an account so that they may do it with joy, and not in sorrow. That would not be to your advantage.” (Hebrews 13:17). In

such an instance it is plain that if the works of such a leader be fruitless, yet if he have remained faithful - if his name be still in the Book of Life - he himself shall be saved and, "At the Bar of the Christ we must all appear in our true characters that each may reap the results of the life which he has lived in the body, in accordance with his actions whether good or worthless." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

This is the tribunal that follows the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, when the just shall be recompensed (Luke 14:14), the unworthy being reserved for the resurrection of the unjust.

**The Day of Wrath.** This is another Day of Judgment. "Hardhearted and impenitent as you are, you are storing up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath when God's justice as a Judge will be revealed." (Romans 2:5).

I think a misunderstanding may easily arise in reading this passage. It is the revelation of God's justice which occurs on the day of wrath and not the giving to every man his due reward. The phrase "he will give to every man what his actions deserve" appears to be a passing reference to Psalm 62:12, unconnected with the time or times of reward. The Twentieth Century translation makes the matter clear but space forbids its quotation here at length.

That Day of Wrath at the end of the 1000 years is referred to in 2 Peter 2:9-13, "to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (A.V.). And again in Hebrews 10:31 and 10:27 and 12:29 and 13:4- The narrative of the resurrection at the end of the 1000 years makes no mention of any worthy ones. But whether there be any worthy ones raised at that time or not, it seems certain that all the unworthy are reserved till that day, "being kept for the day of the judgment and destruction of the godless." (2 Peter 3:7).

And there are other persons besides members of the human race who will be punished then - "those angels... have been kept by Him for the Judgment of the Great Day in everlasting chains and black darkness" (Jude 6) and the saints will judge them, "Do not you know that we are to try angels, to say nothing of the affairs of this life?" 1 Corinthians 6:3). And these angels are not men for the Apostle had just reminded them of that "Do not you know that Christ's people will try the world?" and the phrase "to say nothing of the affairs of this life" takes away the opportunity of saying that these angels are a certain class of men, living in the Millennium.

**Uncertain passages.** That is to say, passages of the exact sense of which I am in doubt:

"Everything is exposed and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we have to give account" Hebrew 4:13. This may mean that we are accountable to God now for all our actions or it may mean that at a future time we shall have to give account, either when Christ returns, if worthy, or at the Day of Wrath, if unworthy. The Concordant Version reads "Now all is naked and bared to the eyes of Him to whom we are accountable" and I think the context shows that this is the sense intended, viz. that the accountability is during the lifetime of the believer, "with boldness then, we may be approaching the Throne of Grace, that we may be obtaining mercy and finding grace for opportune help" (Hebrews 4:6 - C.V). This is a part of the context and although a believer must approach the Throne of Christ at the end, the context shows that it is the Throne of Grace in Heaven during the lifetime of the believer that is being referred to. Hence the accountability is, I believe, during the lifetime of the believer likewise.

Compare Revelation 2:21-24 - "I am he who looks into the hearts and souls of men; and I will give to each one of you what his life deserves."

General passages which do not appear to favour one view more than another. They are listed here only for the sake of completion:-

1 John 2:28; 1 John 4:17; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Revelation 17:8; Revelation 13:8; Luke 9:26;  
Mark 8:38; Matthew 16:27; James 1:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Acts 24:25.

### **A Difficult Passage Explained.**

**Hebrews 9:27,28** - "And, as it is ordained for men to die but once (death being followed by Judgement) so it is with the Christ. He was offered up once and for all to bear away the sins of many and

the second time he will appear but without any burden of sin, to those who are waiting for him, to bring salvation.”

An enlightened disobedient one has in front of him death, the natural death, and because he is unjustified from his sins, this death is to be followed by judgment and then the second death.

But the case is different with a justified believer. Christ bore his sins and suffered the equivalent of the second death for him and in his stead. Hence when Christ returns, it will be for the salvation of the believer.

### **Difficult Passages**

**Luke 17:31** - “If a man is on his housetop... he must not go down to get them” and yet he will be taken involuntarily. I do not understand the passage. That is the first of the two under this heading. The other is 1 Peter 4:3-6, “But they will have to answer for their conduct to him who is ready to judge both the living and the dead. For that was why the Good News was told to the dead also - that after they have been judged in the body as men are judged, they might live in the spirit, as God lives.” I quote the passage here. I do not understand it.

**Daniel 12:2** - The A.V. translation is by no means certain. The well known Tregelles translates as “And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake, these shall be unto everlasting life; but those (the rest of the sleepers who do not awake at this time) shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt. He says “The word which in the authorized version is rendered twice as “some” is never repeated in any other passage in the Hebrew Bible in the sense of taking up distributively any general class which had been previously mentioned; this is enough, I think, to warrant our applying its first occurrence to the whole of the many who awake, and the second to the mass of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time.”

**Judgments.** For the purpose of not omitting knowingly any relative passages I here give some other passages relating to judgments, but which do not appear to bear directly upon our enquiry:-

John 8:26;            John 12:31;            John 16:11;            1 Corinthians 6:11;            Romans 3:4-7;  
Romans 3:19;        Romans 13:2-5;        Revelation 19:2

**The Parables.** These I append last because if they were admitted as evidence of the time and method of resurrection and judgment they would be self-contradictory. For example, in the parable of the Tares the angels sever the wicked from the just first, and then gather the good into the barns. In the parable of the Virgins, the good are taken and the wicked are left.

The parables contain valuable teaching but they are for the purpose of teaching each its own lesson only and must not be strained.

The following seem to have reference to resurrection and judgment:

Of the Sheep and Goats - Matthew 25:31-46  
Of the Wedding Feast - Luke 13:24-30  
Of the Talents - Luke 19:12-28  
Of the Drunken Servant - Luke 12:42-48  
Of the Tares - Matthew 13:24-33  
Of the Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13.

**Conclusion.** “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Malachi 3:16,17.

God grant this to be the end of each one of us.

***Footnote:-*** *There are instances of men like Pharaoh, who have been blinded by their own delusions, thinking they could fight against Yahweh, the Ever-living, and prevail! And I believe that the course of scriptural history shows that the Adversary imagines the same delusion and is being allowed by God to do so - perhaps even encouraged in the delusion according to 2 Thessalonians 2:11. But I must not stop now to give reason for this belief.*

Your fellowservant, A.H.Broughton. 22nd November 1929.

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## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **We have received the following from Brother John Stevenson:-**

Recently some Baptist friends gave me a book which profoundly impressed me. It illuminated the Gospel of Jesus with a clarity and brilliance that I had not previously encountered. I believe the author gets right to the central core of the Gospel which is all too easily overlooked by ardent students thereof.

My feeling is that this book should be required reading for every professing Christian. Philip Yancey is unfortunately a conventional Christian, believing in the Trinity doctrine, heaven and hell and the deity of Jesus. But that can be overlooked as you read his thesis. His other books may be disappointing in comparison. I hope the following extracts from this 300 page book will whet your appetite for more.

Brother John Stevenson

### **“What’s So Amazing About Grace?” by Philip Yancey**

I grew up in a church that drew sharp lines between “the age of Law” and “the age of Grace.” While ignoring most moral prohibitions from the Old Testament, we had our own pecking order rivalling the Orthodox Jews. At the top were smoking and drinking (this being the South, however, with its tobacco-dependant economy, some allowances were made for smoking). Movies ranked just below these vices, with many church members refusing even to attend *The Sound of Music*. Rock music, then in its infancy, was likewise regarded as an abomination, quite possibly demonic in origin. Other proscriptions - wearing make-up and jewellery, reading the Sunday paper, playing or watching sports on Sunday, mixed swimming (curiously termed “mixed bathing”), skirt length for girls, hair length for boys - were heeded or not heeded depending on a person’s level of spirituality. I grew up with the strong impression that a person became spiritual by attending to these gray-area rules. For the life of me I could not figure out much difference between the dispensations of Law and Grace.

My visits to other churches have convinced me that this ladder-like approach to spirituality is nearly universal. Catholics, Mennonites, Churches of Christ, Lutherans and Southern Baptists all have their own custom agenda of legalism. You gain the church’s, and presumably God’s approval by following the prescribed pattern.

Mark Twain used to talk about people who .were “good in the worst sense of the word,” a phrase that for many, captures the reputation of Christians today. Recently I have been asking a question of strangers - for example, seat-mates on an airplane - when I strike up a conversation. “When I say the words “evangelical Christian” what comes to mind?” In reply, mostly I hear political descriptions of strident pro-life activists, or gay-rights opponents, or proposals for censoring the Internet. I hear references to the Moral Majority, an organization disbanded years ago. Not once - not once - have I heard a description redolent of grace. Apparently that is not the aroma Christians give off in the world.

H-L-Mencken described a Puritan as a person with a haunting fear that someone, somewhere is happy; today, many people would apply the same caricature to evangelicals or fundamentalists. Where does this reputation of uptight joylessness come from? A column by humorist Erma Mombeck provides a clue:-

In church the other Sunday I was intent on a small child who was turning around smiling at everyone. He wasn't gurgling, spitting, humming, kicking, tearing the hymnals, or rummaging through his mother's handbag. He was just smiling. Finally, his mother jerked him about and in a stage whisper that could be heard in a little theatre off Broadway said, "Stop that grinning! You're in church!" With that, she gave him a belt and as the tears rolled down his cheeks added, "That's better," and returned to her prayers...

Suddenly I was angry. It occurred to me the entire world is in tears, and if you're not, then you'd better get with it. I wanted to grab this child with the tear-stained face close to me and tell him about my God. The happy God. The smiling God. The God who had to have a sense of humour to have created the likes of us... By tradition, one wears faith with the solemnity of a mourner, the gravity of a mask of tragedy, and the dedication of a Rotary badge.

What a fool, I thought. Here was a woman sitting next to the only light left in our civilization - the only hope, our only miracle - our only promise of infinity. If he couldn't smile in church, where was there left to go?

These characterizations of Christians are surely incomplete, for I know many Christians who embody grace. Yet somehow throughout history the church has managed to gain a reputation for its ungrace. As a little English girl prayed, "O God, make the bad people good, and the good people nice."

During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C.S.Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law - each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

We are accustomed to finding a catch in every promise, but Jesus' stories of extravagant grace include no catch, no loophole disqualifying us from God's love. Each has at its core an ending too good to be true - or so good that it must be true. How different are these stories from my own childhood notions about God: a God who forgives, yes, but reluctantly, after making the penitent squirm. I imagined God as a distant thundering figure who prefers fear and respect to love. Jesus tells instead of a father publicly humiliating himself by rushing out to embrace a son who has squandered half the family fortune. There is no solemn lecture, "I hope you've learned your lesson." Instead, Jesus tells of the father's exhilaration - "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" - and then adds the buoyant phrase, "they began to make merry."

Jesus' parable of the workers and their grossly unfair pay-checks confronts this scandal head-on. In a contemporary Jewish version of this story, the workers hired late in the afternoon work so hard that the employer, impressed, decides to award them a full day's wages. Not so in Jesus' version, which notes that the last crop of workers have been idly standing around in the marketplace, something only lazy, shiftless workers would do during harvest season. Moreover, these laggards do nothing to distinguish themselves and the other workers are shocked by the pay they receive. What employer in his right mind would pay the same amount for one hour's work as for twelve?

Jesus' story makes no economic sense and that was His intent. He was giving us a parable about grace, which cannot be calculated like a day's wages. Grace is not about finishing last or first; it is about not counting. We receive grace as a gift from God, not as something we toil to earn, a point that Jesus made clearly through the employer's response:

"Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

The employer in Jesus' story did not cheat the full-day workers by paying everyone for one hour's work instead of twelve. No, the full-day workers got what they were promised. Their discontent arose from the scandalous mathematics of grace. They could not accept that their employer had the right to do what he wanted with his money when it meant paying scoundrels twelve times what they deserved.

Significantly, many Christians who study this parable identify with the employees who put in a full day's work, rather than the add-ons at the end of the day. We like to think of ourselves as responsible workers and the employers' strange behaviour baffles us as it did the original hearers. We risk missing the story's point: that God dispenses gifts, not wages. None of us gets paid according to merit, for none of us comes close to satisfying God's requirements for a perfect life. If paid on the basis of fairness, we would all end up in outer darkness.

In the words of Robert Farrar Capon, "If the world could have been saved by good- bookkeeping, it would have been saved by Moses, not Jesus." Grace cannot be reduced to generally accepted accounting principles- In the bottom-line realm of ungrace, some workers deserve more than others; in the realm of grace the word deserve does not even apply.

The gospel is not at all what we would come up with on our own. I for one would expect to honour the virtuous over the profligate. I would expect to have to clean up my act before even applying for an audience with a Holy God. But Jesus told of God ignoring a fancy religious teacher and turning instead to an ordinary sinner who pleads, "God, have mercy." Throughout the Bible, in fact, God shows a marked preference for "real" people over "good" people. In Jesus own words, "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

From nursery school onward we are taught how to succeed in the world of ungrace. The early bird gets the worm. No pain. No gain. There is no such thing as a free lunch. Demand your rights. Get what you pay for. I know these rules well because I live by them, I work for what I earn; I like to win; I insist on my rights. I want people to get what they deserve - nothing more, nothing less.

Yet if I care to listen, I hear a loud whisper from the gospel that I did not get what I deserved. I deserved punishment and got forgiveness. I deserved wrath and got love. I deserve a debtor's prison and got instead a clean credit history. I deserved stern lectures and crawl-on-your-knees repentance, I got a banquet spread for me.

Theologian Romano Guardini offers this diagnosis of the fatal flaw in the search for revenge: "As long as you are tangled in wrong and revenge, blow and counterblow, aggression and defence, you will be constantly drawn into fresh wrong... Only forgiveness frees us from the injustice of others." If everyone followed the "eye for an eye" principle of justice, observed Ghandi, eventually the whole world would go blind.

In Hosea, the scandal of grace became an actual talk-of-the-town scandal. What goes through a man's mind when his wife treats him as Gomer treated Hosea? He wanted to kill her, he wanted to forgive her. He wanted divorce, he wanted reconciliation. She shamed him, she melted him. Absurdly, against all odds, the irresistible power of love won out. Hosea the cuckold, joke of the community, welcomed his wife back home.

Gomer did not get fairness, or even Justice; she got grace. Every time I read their story - or read God's speeches that begin with sternness and dissolve into tears - I marvel at a God who allows Himself to endure such humiliation only to come back for more. "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over,

Israel?" Substitute your own name for Ephraim and Israel. At the heart of the gospel is a God who deliberately surrenders to the wild, irresistible power of love.

Centuries later an apostle would explain God's response in more analytical terms: "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more." Paul knew better than anyone who has ever lived that grace comes undeserved, at God's initiative and not our own. Knocked flat on the ground on the way to Damascus, he never recovered from the impact of grace: the word appears no later than the second sentence in every one of his letters. As Frederick Buechner says, "Grace is the best he can wish them because grace is the best he himself ever received."

Paul harped on grace because he knew what could happen if we believe we have earned God's love. In dark times, if perhaps we badly fail God, or if for no good reason we simply feel unloved, we would stand on shaky ground. We would fear that God might stop loving us when He discovers the real truth about us. Paul - "the chief of sinners" he once called himself - knew beyond doubt that God loves people because of who God is, not because of who we are.

Aware of the apparent scandal of grace, Paul took pains to explain how God has made peace with human beings. Grace baffles us because it goes against the intuition everyone has that, in the face of injustice, some price must be paid. A murderer cannot simply go free. A child abuser cannot shrug and say, "I just felt like it." Anticipating these objections, Paul stressed that a price has been paid - by God Himself. God gave up His own Son rather than give up on humanity.

Tony Campolo sometimes asked students at secular universities what they know about Jesus. Can they recall anything Jesus said? By clear consensus they reply, "Love your enemies." More than any other teaching of Christ, that one stands out to an unbeliever. Such an attitude is unnatural, perhaps downright suicidal. It's hard enough to forgive your rotten brothers, as Joseph did, but your enemies? The gang of thugs down the bloc? Iraqis? The drug dealers poisoning our nation?

Theologically, the Gospels give a straightforward answer to why God asks us to forgive: because that is what God is like. When Jesus first gave the command "Love your enemies" he added this rationale "...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Anyone, said Jesus, can love friends and family: "Do not even pagans do that?" Sons and daughters of the Father are called to a higher law, in order to resemble the forgiving Father. We are called to be like God, to bear God's family likeness.

Wrestling with the command to "love your enemies" while being persecuted under Nazi Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer finally concluded that it was this very quality of the "peculiar... the extraordinary, the unusual" that sets a Christian apart from others. Even as he worked to undermine the regime, he followed Jesus' command to "Pray for those who persecute you." Bonhoeffer wrote:

"Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God. Jesus does not promise that when we bless our enemies and do good to them they will not spitefully use and persecute us. They certainly will. But not even that can hurt or overcome us, so long as we pray for them... We are doing vicariously for them what they cannot do for themselves."

Why did Bonhoeffer strive to love his enemies and pray for his persecutors? He had only one answer: "God loves His enemies - that is the glory of His love, as every follower of Jesus knows." If God forgave our debts, how can we not do the same?

There is a simple cure for people who doubt God's love and question God's grace to turn to the Bible and examine the kind of people God loves. Jacob, who dared take God on in a wrestling match and ever after bore a wound from that struggle, became the eponym for God's people, the "children of Israel." The Bible tells of a murderer and adulterer who gained a reputation as the greatest King of the Old Testament, a "man after God's own heart." And of a church being led by a disciple who cursed and swore that he had never known Jesus. And of a missionary being recruited from the ranks of the Christian-torturers. I get

mailings from Amnesty International and as I look at their photos of men and women who have been beaten and cattle-prodded and jabbed and spit on and electrocuted, I ask myself, "What kind of human being could do that to another human being?" Then I read the Book of Acts and meet the kind of person who could do such a thing – now an apostle of grace, a servant of Jesus Christ, the greatest missionary history has ever known. If God can love that kind of person, maybe, just maybe, He can love the likes of me.

I cannot moderate my definition of grace, because the Bible forces me to make it as sweeping as possible. God is "the God of all grace," in the apostle Peter's words and grace means there is nothing I can do to make God love me more, and nothing I can do to make God love me less. It means that I, even I who deserve the opposite, am invited to take my place at the table in God's family.

During the Brezhnev era at the height of the Cold War, Billy Graham visited Russia and met with government and church leaders. Conservatives back home reproached him for treating the Russians with such courtesy and respect. He should have taken a more prophetic role, they said, by condemning the abuses of human rights and religious liberty. One of his critics accused him of setting the church back fifty years. Graham listened, lowered his head and replied, "I am deeply ashamed. I have been trying hard to set the church back two thousand years."

One day I discovered this admonition from the apostle Paul tucked in among many other admonition in Romans 12. Hate evil. Be joyful. Live in harmony. Do not be conceited - the list goes on and on. Then appears this verse, "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay', says the Lord."

At last I understood: in the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. By forgiving another I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. By forgiving I release my own right to get even and leave all issues of fairness for God to work out. I leave in God's hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy.

When Joseph finally came to the place of forgiving his brothers, the hurt did not disappear, but the burden of being their judge fell away. Though wrong does not disappear when I forgive, it loses its grip on me and is taken over by God who knows what to do. Such a decision involves risk, of course; the risk that God may not deal with the person as I would want. (The prophet Jonah, for instance, resented God for being more merciful than the Ninevites deserved).

I never find forgiveness easy and rarely do I find it completely satisfactory. Nagging injustices remain and the wounds still cause pain. I have to approach God again and again, yielding to Him the residue of what I thought I had committed to Him long ago. I do so because the Gospels make clear the connection: God forgives my debts as I forgive my debtors. The reverse is also true: only by living in the stream of God's grace will I find the strength to respond with grace toward others.

A cease-fire between human beings depends upon a cease-fire with God.

Christianity has a principle, "Hate the sin but love the sinner," which is more easily preached than practised. If Christians could simply recover that practice, modelled so exquisitely by Jesus, we would go a long way toward fulfilling our calling as dispensers of God's grace. For a long time C.S.Lewis reports, he could never understand the hair-splitting distinction between hating a person's sin and hating the sinner. How could you hate what a man did and not hate the man?

"But years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life - namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself. There had never been the slightest difficulty about it. In fact the very reason why I hated the things was that I loved the man. Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things."

Christians should not compromise in hating sin, says Lewis. Rather we should hate the sins in others in the same way we hate them in ourselves: being sorry the person has done such things and hoping that somehow, sometime, somewhere, that person will be cured.

As I study the life of Jesus, one fact consistently surprises me: the group that made Jesus angriest was the group that, externally at least, He most resembled. Scholars agree that Jesus closely matched the profile of a Pharisee. He obeyed the Torah, or Mosaic Law, quoted leading Pharisees and often took their side in public arguments. Yet Jesus singled out the Pharisees for His strongest attacks. “Snakes!” He called them. “Brood of vipers! Fools! Hypocrites! Blind guides! Whitewashed tombs!”

What provoked such outbursts: The Pharisees had much in common with those whom the press might call Bible-belt fundamentalists today. They devoted their lives to following God, gave away an exact tithe, obeyed every minute law in the Torah and sent out missionaries to gain new converts. Against the relativists and secularists of the first century, they held firm to traditional values. Rarely involved in sexual sin or violent crime, the Pharisees made model citizens.

Jesus’ fierce denunciation of the Pharisees shows how seriously He viewed the toxic threat of legalism. Its dangers are elusive, slippery, hard to pin down and I have scoured the New Testament in search of them - especially Luke 11 and Matthew 23, where Jesus morally dissects the Pharisees. I mention them here because I believe these dangers represent as great a threat in the twentieth century as they did in the first. Legalism takes different forms now than it did in my childhood, but by no means has it gone away.

Overall, Jesus condemned the legalists emphasis on externals. “You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness,” He said. Expressions of love for God had, over time, evolved into ways of impressing others. In Jesus’ day, religious people wore gaunt and hungry looks during a brief fast, prayed grandiosely in public and wore portions of the Bible strapped to their bodies.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus denounced the motives behind such seemingly harmless practices:

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full- But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen”

I have seen what happens when Christians ignore Jesus’ commands. For instance, the church of my childhood conducted an annual funding drive for foreign missions. From the pulpit, the pastor would call out the names and amounts of each pledge that came in: “Mr Jones, five hundred dollars... and listen to this - the Sanderson family, two thousand dollars! Praise the Lord!” We all applauded and said “Amen” and the Sanderson’s beamed. As a child I craved that kind of public recognition, not to further the cause of foreign missions but to get approval and acclaim. Once I hauled a large bag of pennies down front, and never did I feel more righteous than when the pastor stopped the proceedings, commended me and prayed over the pennies. I had my reward.

Who is my enemy? The abortionist? The Hollywood producer polluting our culture? The politician threatening my moral principles? The drug lord ruling my inner city? If my activism, however well-motivated, drives out love, then I have misunderstood Jesus’ Gospel. I am stuck with law, not the Gospel of grace.

The issues facing society are pivotal and perhaps a culture war is inevitable. But Christians should use different weapons in fighting wars, the “weapons of mercy”. Jesus declared that we should have one distinguishing mark: not political correctness or moral superiority but love. Paul added that without love nothing we do - no miracle of faith, no theological brilliance, no flaming personal sacrifice - will avail (1 Corinthians 13).

Even if Christians demonstrated the highest standard of ethics, however, that alone would not fulfil the Gospel. After all, the Pharisees had impeccable ethics. Rather, Jesus reduced the mark of a Christian to one word. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples," He said, "if you love one another." The most subversive act the church can take is consistently to obey that one command.

Philip Yancey.

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## Some Comments on the "GLAD TIDINGS MAGAZINE"

No. 1263. 105th year

Going back to the early history of this magazine when William Grant was its Editor the evidence is still in print where any unbiased reader can see that a certain Andrew Wilson proved both Wm. Grant and C.C.Walker as erroneous and false teachers in respect of the true meaning of the Sacrifice of Christ. Yet this same falsehood and error is still being taught because of an allegiance to a man-made creed rather than to the Bible which they ask people to read, at the same time giving beforehand their own theories received by the traditions of men.

One of the writers in this issue is A.H.Nicholls who insists that Jesus died as a representative not a substitute but fails to see that if this were so then Jesus should have died by natural decay if the death incurred by Adam was by this latter means. This theory would also mean that the animal sacrifices for sin under the law would be typical representatives of Jesus and of those who offered them, whereas they were substitutes who died by bloodshedding instead of, or in the place of the sinners.

The animals were not included in the sin of the world, not having been under law and could not be representative of sinners, but they could be substitutes because God said of their blood wherein was the life of the flesh, "I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls." Is it not therefore plain to see that the shedding of the blood of the antitype Jesus, was substitutional, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God? Does dying a natural death bring us to God? You know it cannot. You appeal to the Bible and it teaches that to be reconciled to God it must be through the death of His Son - not suffering physically that death but symbolically in the waters of Baptism.

I shall return to this subject later in the course of my comments but suffice it for the present and accept that the typical lamb for the pardon of sin under the law was God's provision and of His creation, that is why He could say "I have given it to you upon the altar to make an Atonement."

So it was with God's own Son - "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." Jesus did not come as your representative or as mine; he came as God's representative to take away the Sin (singular) of the world. No person under condemnation could do this.

The writings of Tecwyn Morgan on the subject of human nature being synonymous of the Devil and sin-in-the-flesh are well known to me and I remember writing something a few years ago refuting what he had written in this same magazine, which was not very becoming on his part in relation to its title "Glad Tidings" as I had no feelings of gladness in what he wrote.

Now on page 3, last paragraph, he is quoting 2 Corinthians 5:14 which incidentally is not a tenet of the Christadelphian teaching and belief, namely Paul's teaching of the substitutional death and sacrifice of Christ. This passage from 2 Corinthians 5:14 confirms that the death of Christ was for those without strength (without God, having no hope), the ungodly and it gave them continuance of natural existence that by this Divine provision and by faith all could avail themselves of reconciliation having already been reconciled when enemies by the death of God's Son, so that Paul speaks of two phases of reconciliation. The

first being unconditional while in the loins of Adam, the second through enlightenment and faith in the sacrifice of Christ unto eternal life. See Romans 5:8-10.

A reading of Romans 5:15 will confirm exactly what Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 5:14. The R.S.V. quotation alters nothing; it refers to all having died on a Federal Principle through Adam's sin. The Apostle is thus judging "that if one (Jesus) died for all then all were dead." This was the legal position of all members of the Adamic body (the living soul) under sentence of the violation of law (Death by Sin), he was already a corruptible man capable of dying if left to a nature unchanged to incorruptibility. So the sentence of death meant a taking away of the life in the blood - not a causing of death already operative by reason of gradual decay (lasting in Adam's case 930 years). It was not our personal offences that separated us from God, it was the offence of Adam so God concluded all under that one offence, that by the obedience of one (Jesus), He could conclude all under justification of life. (Romans 5:18).

If Adam's life had been taken when he sinned we could never have existed and if Adam's natural death was the incurred penalty where does Redemption come in? Surely God cannot redeem and forgive yet exact the full penalty!

If Adam by natural death fulfilled the penalty incurred then he was never redeemed and never forgiven and for anyone to say resurrection is the means of redemption, or rescue, is talking unscriptural nonsense and putting the cart before the horse and nullifying Romans chapters 5,6,7, and 8. We must accept that judicial death is the death that is reigning by the Sin which entered into the world (not into the flesh) and Romans 5:12 explains that death reigns as long as people remain under the reign of sin, but the opportunity is always there for persons to allow grace to reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ (verses 19,20,21). The reign of sin and death ends therefore, at valid Baptism into Christ's death and rising to newness of life in Him-

If Christ is not risen from the dead the baptized are yet in their sins and consequently abide in death (a legal position). If the condemnation is death by natural decay and sin be an element in the physical flesh, Baptism can avail nothing - this being the tenet of Christadelphian belief and doctrine - then although Christ is risen they who support such a false doctrine are yet in their sins, legally and spiritually dead, because their same condemned-flesh rose from the water obviously. Where is God's love commended if Jesus was also a sinner when He is said to have died for us? God commends His love to us in allowing a sinless, spotless Son of His own begetting and love, to be nailed on the Cross that we and those of all ages might have life, natural existence, and life more abundantly when Jesus reigns in glory. In Romans 5:6 Paul states "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," and in verse 8 Paul again states "While we were yet sinners (ungodly) Christ died for us." How can any sincere Bible reader and student include Jesus Christ in the ungodly category? Is this the reason Christadelphians believe He represented sinners by being one of that 'many' Himself?

Clause IX of the B.A.S.F. states that "Jesus suffered the death required by the righteousness of God." True it is Jesus died an inflicted death by the shedding of blood but Clause X states that He suffered the death that passed upon all men, which Clause V states was a physical law of decay that ultimately ended in natural death and a return to dust and that Jesus shared this particular death (Clause X).

This is a sample of the contradictory contents of the B.A.S.F. upon which Christadelphianism is based and by which its many divisional elements have been caused since 1873. Its correction and revision on the Basis of Truth would cause such upheaval of this organized community that A.H.Nicholls entertained the impossible theory that division could be cured by still adhering to such an erroneous and contradictory document that no Christadelphian can interpret sensibly. A.H.Nicholls no doubt writes a lot of helpful material and is very sincere but if his allegiance to a dead document is in priority of allegiance to Christ and Truth, then it will get neither he nor his readers to the position that matters.

Page 4. "The Lesson of The Seed." Doug Hardy's explanation of this is very good and shows that there is only One Seed, Christ, yet making up many members of His body - all the children of God by faith and introduction into Christ and not by fleshly descent. See Galatians 3:26-29 and Romans 9:6-8.

Why ignore this lesson and draw attention to Jews after the flesh by saying they were being miraculously gathered to the land of Promise as the sign of the near return of Jesus? This is mere supposition. Do not think I am opposed to the Jews or of their return to the land but this will be in fulfilment

of the Scriptures when the Deliverer comes out of Sion and turns away ungodliness through the new covenant which in general they have rejected. See Romans 11:25-32 and Hebrews 8:8-13.

When God gathers them from the lands where He has scattered them He addresses them as My People - My Sons and Daughters. They are only in this category if they are in the bond of the New Covenant, Christ's, and Abraham's seed, until then they have no heirship to the promises. You should stand by Galatians 3:28,29 and give the First-fruits unto God - Jew and also Gentile who are already Christ's at His coming - the priority over those who are yet in the flesh. The Lord is coming to His temple first. Malachi 3:1 and 2 Corinthians 6:16. When Jesus spoke the parable of the Fig Tree and all the trees, He explained that by seeing them shooting forth people knew that summer was near at hand. So likewise with the signs He had given in Luke 21 of the prevailing conditions prior to His return and the establishing of His Kingdom, when you witness these signs then know that it is nigh even at the doors. This to me teaches nothing about Jews returning to Israel - they had not even been scattered when Jesus mentioned the signs to herald His Kingdom and if to some people the fig tree has any significance to the Jews then they must be prepared to give the significance of all the trees in the parable other than their showing summer to be nigh.

Page 6. "Who goes to heaven?" Charles Samain sums up very well the thoughts and feelings of popular Christianity but when he goes on to elaborate on death and appealing to the reader to go to the Bible for its meaning and reason, he himself fails to clarify the difference between "death" as a result of man's corruptible nature by creation, Genesis 2:7, and 1 Corinthians 15:44-49, and "the death" which came by sin (Adam's disobedience), Romans 5, which I have previously explained. But he goes further than what the Bible teaches by saying "Adam and Eve's disobedience brought the consequence of sin and death upon themselves and all present and future living things in the earth." This would mean that God penalized all the living species of His creation on account of transgression of Law to which they were not accountable- He then goes on to wrest Scripture out of context to prove his point and ends up showing himself and his community to be a little deceptive in the use of Ezekiel 18:4 which does not speak of the soul that sinneth dying a natural death but a judicial inflicted of death under the law which set before them life or death. He is therefore incorrect in his following statement "So where is the clear reason for the universality of corruption in the world: death is the Divine punishment for sin, it is the consequence of disobeying the commands of God." This is a completely erroneous view of the context of Ezekiel 18 where the statement "Surely Die" is used in the same context as in the Divine statement to Adam - Genesis 2:17, meaning Death by Law, not by physical decay already operative.

You are prepared to accept the latter physical state of Adam at creation when it comes to proving the non-immortality of the soul yet reverting to a "neutral state" non-existent in the Scriptures in order to fit your changed flesh doctrine of the Apostate churches found in Clause V of your Statement of Faith. Read Ezekiel 18 to the end and see whether your theories are even the same as those of Israel at the time when regarding God's ways as unequal when it was quite the opposite.

Is it Divine equality and justice to defile Adam's nature and cause him to be capable of transmitting it to his posterity? (Clause V). Ezekiel 18:20 states "the soul that sinneth it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Seeing Paul would have known this, why not seek for a proper and correct interpretations of what he is teaching in Romans by revelation from Jesus Christ, rather than accepting the superficial reading and interpretation of men with preconceived theories?

Charles Samain also states, Page 7, "The evidence of the power of death is all around us, but mankind has never wanted to see death as the end of life..." Again he confuses natural corruptibility with the Death with which Paul was concerned in his teaching in Romans 5 and Hebrews 2:14 and 15 and also Jesus Himself in John 5:24. That which has the power of death, of which Jesus spoke and Paul, is not all around us in nature, but in the message of redemption and salvation in the Scriptures. How else could Jesus have destroyed by His death that which had the power of death if that power is still operating on those who have been given the victory over it now?

If you look back at my earlier remarks you will see that "Judicial death" hangs over men as a deferred sentence as long as sin reigns. Paul says "The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law," How can a law ordained to life be the strength of sin? How can this sting of death be removed? Jesus removed it by taking or bearing away the Sin of the world- He paid Adam's debt to the law he had violated in Eden, which was natural life in the blood - it was Adam's offence. Moreover, as a reminder continually of this

Paul says "The law entered that the offence might abound," that is, Adam's offence. Romans 5:20, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death (Baptism into Christ) even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Charles Samain ends his remarks of Part 1 with the words "Death is a serious matter." But the death he is alluding to is not as serious as he claims - many welcome it as a merciful release from suffering; many die in their sleep and being unenlightened and irresponsible, will know no more. This is the death that all animal creation was created subject to. Therefore the death to be made free from is a legal and judicial one, escape from which is by dying to sin by Baptism into the death Jesus suffered in reality for all. Romans 8:2 and Romans 6:7. If people would only heed the lesson being put over to them by Paul in his epistles they would realize that he is dealing with sin and death in its relation to Divine Law on the Federal Principle - the physical and natural creation taking its course as ordained - first that which is natural afterward that which is spiritual. Charles Samain need not consider a second part on this subject. He and his readers need to examine more closely what I and others have drawn attention to over the years, namely the inability of the Christadelphian community in general to explain on the basis of the Bible the doctrine of the Atonement without violating the B.A.S.F. in some of its Clauses.

On page 12 "Redemption and Salvation." A.H.Nicholls talks about a rescue mission by God through Christ and adds to Hebrews 2:14 a phrase that is not there by saying of Jesus "Thus He destroyed in Himself him that hath the power of death, that is the devil." Of Hebrews 2:14 he says "One of the Scriptures that lead us to believe that the "Devil" is scriptural picture language for "Sin." A.H.Nicholls therefore implies that the Devil, or Sin, co-habited with God in the person of Jesus and that the Devil by influencing the Jewish rulers in putting Christ to death was by this means instrumental in destroying Himself and doing mankind a favour in the process. Is this also what Alfred Norris meant in his booklet "Understanding The Bible" where he wrote "When Jesus expired on the cross the Devil hung there dead"?

A.H.Nicholls on the basis of his own words must believe that the Devil was alive in Jesus on the Cross before He expired. God, not the Devil was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them.

I have explained from Scripture this Atoning work without having to resort to adding to the word through ignorance of why Christ died and to make it appear that He died for Himself and could not therefore be what the Scriptures accurately state and what Jesus Himself states, a Ransom - a Substitute for many. Does not Paul state to the Roman believers "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace"? So anyone under the Law of Moses was under the dominion of Sin - that is the sin that entered the world and by which man was in bondage through Adam's offence. Therefore Paul said, "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound..." So when by His death on the Cross the rituals of Sacrifices and the handwriting of ordinances were blotted out it meant that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ and superseded by grace, so in effect was fulfilled Hebrews 2:15 (which Christadelphians seldom quote) "and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Surely under the Mosaic Law they did not fear natural death. Oh no, they were in fear of Judicial death and depended on typical sin offerings and the mercy and righteous judgement of God, in accepting their sin-offerings instead of their own deaths. When about to be taken by the Jews to His false trial and crucifixion Jesus said "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "Oh no," say "Glad Tidings" writers, the Devil must be in Him first in order to be destroyed and as Adam's descendants also having the Devil, or Sin-in-the-flesh, He shared their death by having their nature."

A.H.Nicholls also states that we share Christ's death in the waters of Baptism. We do nothing of the kind. We acknowledge His physical suffering and death as a Sacrifice for us. We share no suffering or death by wicked hands when baptized. Rather we should and do rejoice that He has suffered the inflicted, judicial death which came by Adam's sin, for us unjustly. Yes, "the Just for the unjust" to bring us to God.

"Sharing" is another crafty phrase from the Birmingham Statement of Faith and it is high time its false teaching was discarded and a re-assessment of true teaching put in its place, but what an upheaval this would cause! As far as A.H.Nicholls was concerned in April 1972 it did not bear thinking about. I wonder if he thinks the same at present, for it is obvious that he and many more are aware of the rumblings in the community. I replied to "Glad Tidings" not to add to these rumblings but show where they originate and because it was presented to certain people to give the impression that its teaching was according to the Bible.

I have written a reply to the booklet "Raised to Judgement" by Michael Ashton and this also refutes A.H.Nicholls' statements under the heading "Resurrection, Judgment and Eternal Life" copies of this article are available.

I conclude with 2 Timothy 2:11 to 14, "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit but to the subverting of the hearers."

Brother Phil Parry. (1989)

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### **Excerpts from a letter by Brother John Stevenson to a Christadelphian:-**

"...The New Testament teems with texts endorsing the transactional nature of the Atonement; for example, that Jesus died for our sins, for our transgressions, for our iniquities, that He bore the sins of many, that He gave His life for the sheep, that He was delivered for our offences, He was sacrificed for us, that He was rich and became poor for our sakes, that He purges our sins, that He tasted death for every man, that He suffered for us, the just for the unjust, and "for Thou wast slain and by Thy blood did ransom men for God." Consequently, although Cadoux correctly rejects the three transactional views accepted by the church down the ages, nevertheless a transactional view is obviously called for and the correct view is that the ransom was paid by God to the metaphorical King of Sin. The fact that Satan the Devil has no real existence does not nullify this concept because his servants exacted the full price of the ransom from the innocent Jesus. Therefore we maintain that this transactional view, which is scriptural, does not in any way conflict with the moral view; in fact the two can be seen as a unity; one without the other is inadequate for the understanding of the Atonement; they are the two sides of the same coin...

I recently acquired "The Complete Plain Words" by Sir Ernest Gowers, 1986 revised edition. It helped me to understand your standpoint regarding changes in language, but at the same time it offers considerable support to my view that words should be standardized and used correctly to enable clear communication. An example of how this is crucial to understanding the doctrine is in the confounding of the word "corruptible," which means physically perishable, and "mortal," which is a legal term meaning under condemnation. Dr John Thomas and Robert Roberts evidently believed that these words were synonymous. Modern linguists might argue that they have come to mean the same thing; that is, destined to grow old and die. But I would contend that a serious Bible student must not confuse them. As Ernest Brady wrote in "What God Hath Cleansed," page 38, "Dr Thomas' mistake and John Carter's difficulty arise from the mistaken assumption that corruptibility and mortality are interchangeable terms; they are not. Corruptible means capable of death, though not necessarily destined to die, as opposed to incorruptible, which mean undying. Mortal means subject to death by law - or under sentence of death, as opposed to immortal, not subject to death. So that a person may be corruptible but not mortal, as was Adam at his creation, or corruptible and mortal, as was Adam after transgression. Or a person may be corruptible and immortal, as was Jesus in His natural life, and as are the true saints in Christ now, or incorruptible and immortal, as was Jesus when He came from the tomb, and as the saints will be after they are raised and/or changed."

It is my belief that a correct understanding of this matter reveals the errors in some Clauses of the B.A.S.F. It is tragic that the Christadelphian hierarchy has decreed that these topics may not be discussed openly, but that the doctrines of the pioneers must be acquiesced incontestably by loyal members. It is this tyrannical dogmatism, a selfish human defect that brought in to existence the Nazarene Fellowship. I am glad that "The Endeavour Magazine" promotes frank deliberation and exchange,

Best Wishes, Sincerely yours in the service of the Lord, John Stevenson.

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**Recently I was asked to send the last two Circular Letters - Nos. 175 & 176 - to Brother Richard Lister and here I print parts of the letter I received in response dated 20th April 1999:-**

Dear Russell, Greetings in Elpis. If we have not the vision of the prophets of Israel (and the understanding of the visions) then we have not Israel's hope!

This exposition (Eureka) shows the interrelation of doctrine and prophecy in harmony with the promises made to Abraham, and gives the correct understanding for the saints of the last days. The apocalyptic blessing furthermore is to those who "read and hear" (understand, observe narrowly) the words of this prophecy. It (the Apocalypse) is in fact not a book that is difficult to understand by those whose minds are attuned to the things of the spirit and understand ("the wise shall understand" - Daniel 12:10) the words of God's Holy Prophets (2 Peter 3:2), in particular Daniel's visions. My stand is alongside Brother Thomas. "The Pioneer" was dedicated to showing how the Truth was revived by Brother Thomas by his indefatigable labours in Virginia and the Eastern States of the U.S.A., 1832 - 1871. "The Pioneer" publication commenced with his conflicts with Alexander Campbell and finished with his death in 1871, where it has at least temporarily been suspended. The whole point is that after the slaying of the two witnesses, Revelations 11:7, following the massacre of Bartholomew, 1572 and the Revocation of the Edict Nantes 1685, apocalyptic prophecy required their revival after 3 1/2 lunar days when their bodies lay dead in the streets of Babylon the Great, i.e. after 105 years. This revival sprang from the French Revolution and its great awakening of peoples and nations, Revelation 11:11, "The spirit of life entered into the witnesses" i.e. the political and religious witness were revived.

They had to be revived after the long epoch of Papal down-treading and death of the witnesses that their might be a living witness and a people (remnant of the woman's seed) prepared for the Lord at His return. Now this revival of the Truth was undoubtedly accomplished through the instrumentality of Dr. Thomas. Failure to perceive that he was or represented the revival of the two witnesses in its religious connotation will lead a person into avenues of apostasy. In God's providence and apocalyptic plan, the Truth had to be revived and he was the means whereby this was accomplished. His visit to the U.K. in that eventful year 1848 and publication of the book "Elpis Israel" (The Hope of Israel) led to the revival of the Truth on these shores. This is fundamental.

The books Elpis Israel and Eureka together represent the revived Truth, doctrinally and prophetically. Any departure from this constitutes Apostasy. The Truth once revived had then to be kept.

Sadly, as soon as Brother Thomas passed off the scene, the troubles started, although the Dowieites had already introduced apostate thinking, and were finally withdrawn from by Robert Roberts at the prompting of Brother Thomas.

Edward Turney: The irony is that Edward Turney was one of the most loyal supporters of Brother Thomas and wrote many articles for the Ambassador/Christadelphian upholding the fundamentals of the faith and paid great tribute to Brother Thomas on his death in 1871, published in the Ambassador; his views on the Atonement (Renunciationism) therefore represent a monumental act of treachery and betrayal.

The true understanding on this fundamental doctrine on the nature of man, Christ's sacrifice, sin etc., redemption is set forth in Elpis Israel Part I... This represents the Truth and any departure from this revived Truth is Apostasy.

How could Christ condemn sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3) if He was not sin's flesh Himself by physical constitution? To deny that Christ, born of woman, was not as unclean as the bodies He died for is to propound the doctrinal heresy of Antichrist or clean-flesh rampant even in Apostolic Times and resisted by the Apostles (1 John 2). Speculation on Christ's nature has plagued the Apostles teaching ever since and admixed with Gnostic heresy resulted in the doctrine of the Trinity, Unitarianism (mere man), Immaculate Conception, etc. as well as wrong apprehension of the emblems ('Catholic Mass - Transubstantiation).

The apostate teaching of Original Sin was never propounded by Brother Thomas and it is a gross misrepresentation and misunderstanding to imply as such. We the descendants of Adam do not inherit his

original sin nor do we stand condemned by original sin of Adam. Rather as Brother Thomas points out, which as he says is our misfortune, not our fault, we inherit the consequences of his sin, a defiled sin stricken nature, mortality. As Brother Thomas points out two ways were open to Adam represented by the two trees. He wasn't immortal otherwise he would not have needed to eat of the Tree of Life. But then neither was he mortal in the sense you and I are. Otherwise there would have been no need for the Edenic Law and its consequence. "Dying thou shalt die" if breached. This is simple logic. If he had been obedient instead of disobedient he would not have lived to infinity since he was as your articles point out, of a lower estate, earthy or animal nature, not Elohist but then nor not mortal (subject to sin, disease and death) in the sense of his posterity.

The sentence was not merely judicial although this was what Edward Turney's entire case hangs on. Adam was in a very good state as a piece of God's creative handiwork. Subsequent to transgression and as a consequence thereof, sin became implanted in his very physical nature. Paul refers to these as the "motions of sin," i.e. lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, pride of life, or the law in his members warring against the law of his mind (Romans 7).

Christ Himself took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him which hath the power of death, even the Diabolos. By a process of logic therefore Diabolos = flesh, sin's flesh, human nature is synonymous with the Devil, Diabolos, that which cuts across God's Laws. Human nature is the embodiment of Sin

The process of decay became active after transgression resulting in the sin/death stricken state of Adam thereafter and of his progeny i.e. the human race, who ever since have had to contend with their cursed, sin-defiled, disease riddled body of corruption ("vile body").

Christ overcame this source of all evil and nailed it to a stake. Thus was God glorified through obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross and the way to the Tree of Life was opened again by the second Adam.

The animal sacrifices under the law were not substitutes but representative. God teaches by representative, symbolic, metaphoric, figurative or hieroglyphic form. The animals, lamb, etc., represented the believer, represented Christ. Atonement was afforded through the Aaronic Priesthood on this basis alone, hence the placing of hands upon the head, at the act of death. He was to see himself as worthy of death due to his transgression. The animal didn't substitute for him, it represented him. As soon as he thought it was a ritual substitute that he had paid his ransom unaccompanied by personal reformation then the sacrifice became abomination.

This is what happened, which is why God finally removed the Law (AD 70).

The concept of Ransom is obviously figurative and metaphorical rooted in the silver shekel of the sanctuary illustrating the principle that Israel were a "Purchased people," purchased from bondage in Egypt. They were "purchased" by God to Himself, the "purchase price" as it were being the Passover Lamb. So we are purchased by God to Himself from the bondage of sin and death through the atoning provision or propitiation of Christ the Passover Lamb. We are thus a redeemed people, as Israel, but redeemed (bought back) only in prospect based on the personal implementation of the Passover principles of Sacrifice and God manifestation in our own lives, recognizing that "in the flesh there is no good thing," "the flesh profiteth nothing," "My words are spirit, they are life."

To push self-justifying theories and specious arguments of substitution and judicial sentences is to be guilty of Judaism and ritualistic sacramentalism as practised in its fullness by the Catholic Church in its judicial forms and ritualism of the Mass, where substitution theory reaches its full development in the bread and wine substitution of the Mass. Sale of indulgences and purgatory.

Speculation on whether Christ had to die for Himself, for His own redemption is commonplace but naive. For a start the sealing of the Covenant necessitated the cutting off of Messiah the Prince to bring in Aeonian righteousness (Daniel 9), to confirm the covenants of Promise to Abraham (Romans 5). These could only be sealed, as a blood covenant, by the blood of the Covenant. Man (Testator - Hebrews 10) of the New (Abrahamic) Covenant. Secondly, Christ's worthiness of the High Office of High Priest for ever

after the order of Melchizedec and Mediator, could only be proven by a life of obedience even unto death. Thereby was God glorified and therefore did He glorify the Son. Anything short of a sinless life unto death would have left a question on Christ's own worthiness, i.e. His overcoming of sin in the flesh, or slaying of the Diabolos. - Hebrews 2. I urge you to think again on the Atonement issues and reread both Elpis Israel and Eureka before it is too late, as the Hour is at hand.

Yours truly contending for the Faith, Richard Lister

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## **Our first reply comes from Brother Phil Parry:-**

To Richard Lister, I doubt you would desire me to address you as a Brother in Christ of the same Faith and I also recognize this would not be right seeing you regard my views (on account of your ignorance of the facts) as heresy and trash which you have not even attempted to prove from the Holy Scriptures but instead have relied on the writings of Elpis Israel and Eureka, books by Dr. Thomas which I have read with the Bible at hand to prove whether he is in error or correct on the subjects he deals with. I therefore have the greatest respect for any truth Dr. Thomas wrote and I have no feelings of animosity toward him on account of his mistaken views; my responsibility is to endeavour to make people aware both of the truth and of the errors and contradictory teaching in his writings not only in Elpis Israel and Eureka but others such as Anastasis.

My reason for writing to you is that on account of your correspondence sent to our Brother Russell Gregory; it brought to his memory two of your letters to (a Christadelphian) which he had filed - so being I was also the subject of your accusations Russell thought I would like to read them as a background to the letter you sent him dated 20.4.99 in which I note your saying of Elpis Israel and Eureka writings, "Any departure from these constitutes Apostasy."

If I myself after reading thoroughly both books, made such a statement you have made, would regard myself as very irresponsible, especially when finding so many statements unsupported by Holy Scripture. This was what (the said Christadelphian) requested me to send to him but I kept no copy and cannot remember exactly what I said to him as evidence including Robert Roberts, but not for the purpose of setting the Dr. at odds with R.Roberts; they did this remarkably well themselves without any help from others. For example Dr. Thomas' teaching supports Clause IV of the B.A.S.F. - Clause V of the same contradicts and destroys it, for this is the unclean flesh doctrine embraced by Dr. Thomas and all Christadelphians but not even taught in Genesis.

The Nazarenes do not believe or teach that the physical flesh is clean or unclean; these terms are related to the Law of God and if Dr. Thomas had read and understood Genesis chapter 7 he would have learned from it that Noah, a righteous man taught of God, knew what animals were considered by the Creator to be styled clean and unclean though they were physically "very good" at their creation and unaltered in any way through Adam's sin; neither was Adam's nature changed, only his relationship to God. (See Elpis Israel reproduced copy Robert Roberts Edition, page 64, bottom of page).

Nowhere in the Genesis account does it say that human nature was unclean as a result of Adam's sin; Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts agreed with each other that there was no physical change, only that of character and we agree with what E.Turney said in his Lecture "That sinful applied to character not to the physical flesh," which Roberts described in his reply was, "A marvellous piece of new-born wisdom to say that sinful applied to the character and not to the substance that produces the character." The conclusion we must come to then is that Adam's substance was sinful at his creation before coming under law. Also that Jesus being of sinless character all His life, - then "sinless" should apply to His physical substance. Thus Roberts destroys your unclean and sinful flesh doctrine in one sentence of sarcastic mockery and leaves the Lamb of God without spot and without blemish as does Dr. Thomas in the book Eureka you request us to read. The Dr. would have known that every particle of the flesh of man is full of blood wherein is the life, so in effect as he says "Every particle of the flesh is full of sin" this must mean that the blood is sin.

What a contradictory and contrasting treatise Dr. Thomas makes of the above in Eureka Volume 1 page 278 as beginning halfway from top of page! “Now the blood of Jesus was more precious than the life-blood of any other man. If it had not been so, it would have been inadequate to the purchase of life for the world.” He goes on to proclaim, “If the wealthiest be impotent for the redemption of one soul, how precious must the blood of the Yahweh-Name be,” seeing it can ransom “a great multitude which no man can number.”! (If you spurn substitution see Elpis Israel page 213). “Jesus was an unblemished man, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; for he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” This latter does not mean Jesus was separated from sinners, yet Dr. Thomas seems to favour the fact he should have been, in that he writes as a result of Adam’s sin “Everything a man touches is cursed.” Jesus was a man of our flesh and blood but He did not belong to sin as we did before God by His Son purchased us to Him. Are we to accept that when Jesus (a man) touched the blind, the lame, the lepers, the sick, etc., etc., that they were cursed? Furthermore why did the Dr. resort to the forgers of lies in the book of Job to support his view that Jesus being born of a woman was as unclean as those he came to save. Are we to ignore on this false error in Job that after all Dr. Thomas made a mistake about the blood of Christ which we as Nazarenes heartily endorse?

I could write more but if you consider us Apostate where would be the point? Read Elpis Israel and Eureka again. I remain a Brother of Christ with your welfare in mind.

P.Parry

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## In Conclusion

**This second response is not a letter sent direct to Richard Lister and I shall not reply at length; the only purpose of publishing his letter at all is to show how shallow and distasteful is the Christadelphian doctrine of the Atonement based as it is on the Augustinian doctrine of changed flesh and far removed from Scripture teaching.**

A few observations will suffice and then I want to refer to other miscellaneous items prompted by recent events and correspondence.

So first to Richard Lister’s letter. Dear me! The writer states or implies that the Nazarene Fellowship are without Israel’s hope; without the apocalyptic blessing; have minds not attuned to the things of the spirit and are without understanding; that we fail to perceive scripture teaching and depart into Apostasy; we are unable to defend by rational argument; we propound the doctrinal heresy of Antichrist; speculate on Christ’s nature; fail to use simple logic; push self-justifying theories and specious arguments and speculate whether or not Christ died for Himself! All this, it appears, is because we fail to see that “Elpis Israel” and “Eureka” represent the revived truth!

However, about halfway through his letter Richard Lister comes to what I consider to be the foundation statement of his arguments where he writes -

“Subsequent to transgression and as a consequence thereof, sin became implanted in his (Adam’s) very physical nature.”

Upon this foundation Richard builds all the usual Christadelphian theories such as “The process of decay became active after transgression resulting in the sin/death stricken state...” “The human race who ever since have to contend with their cursed sin-defiled disease riddled bodies of corruption.” “Human nature is the embodiment of Sin.” “Christ overcame this source of all evil and nailed it to the stake.”

So let’s look again at the foundation for here is the weakness which brings the whole doctrinal structure tumbling around one’s ears simply because it never has been proven that Adam and Eve’s nature was changed to become sinful flesh. The expressions sin-defiled, sin in the flesh, cursed bodies, Christ was Sin’s flesh, etc., have all been invented by man and all dishonour our Creator.

We say the foundation is false and if anyone wishes to show otherwise then it is necessary to show what change took place, when it took place, who made the change and what good purpose it serves or served.

When we have pressed for answers to these questions the diversity of replies only convinces us that Christadelphians have no idea how or when any supposed change took place nor what it really was, but just talk gobbledegook. It is therefore with some measure of belief and relief we accept the recent news that many Christadelphian leaders no longer believe the doctrine of sin in the flesh as taught in Clause V of the B.A.S.F. This is good news as far as it goes but how are they going to change the thinking of so many after so long a time?

I would urge all thinking Christadelphians to persist in asking those they consider to be “Elders” what change took place when Adam and Eve transgressed and why the change was required. The answer Dr. Thomas gave was that the change was moral not physical; that it was a change in Adam’s relationship to his Creator, not his physical state. The reason there was a change in relationship was that God is perfect and while Adam remained perfect in character he was close to his Creator, as close as a son could be to his father, but when he broke the law which God have given him he was no longer close to His Maker but was estranged from Him. God asked perfection of Adam that he should keep the law that he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Transgression of God’s law is sin.

The problem Christadelphians have is with the word “Substitution” which, it seems conjures up something distasteful in their minds. Richard Lister refers to “penitential substitution” by which I suppose him to refer to the idea held by some that God punished His sinless Son, Jesus Christ with crucifixion so that we the guilty sinners who deserved the punishment, could go free. This idea of substitution indeed is distasteful and abhorrent but it is not what happened. “Redemption” said Dr. Thomas, “is release for a ransom.” In the words of others, it is “a releasing effected by payment of ransom” and “Redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom.” John Carter wrote in his exposition of the Letter to the Ephesians, pages 25,26 -

“A closely related idea to ransom is that of purchase, involving the payment of a price. “Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price.” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). “He that was called in the Lord, being a bondservant, is the Lord’s freed man: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ’s bondservant. Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men.” (1 Corinthians 7:22,23). “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us (didst purchase, R.V.) to God with thy blood” (Revelation 5:9). Peter foretold the rise of false teachers who would deny “the Lord that bought them” (2 Peter 2:1)... Redemption then is release effected by Christ.”

So then redemption is purchase by the payment of a ransom to release those in bondage to Sin. Every time we make a purchase we substitute our money for the things we purchase. Could substitution be more easily demonstrated? This is all we ask anyone to believe. The substitution of the purchase price, the life of Jesus Christ, for that which He purchased, the life of the human race.

The idea that if Jesus gave His life for ours then He should not have risen and we ought not to die, is easily refuted for it was Jesus natural life which He laid down and He didn’t receive it back again. He was raised to spirit life. His natural life was given so that we could have natural life and natural life was never meant to last for ever; it has to be replaced with spirit life at the return of Jesus Christ. The difference between the two “lives” is seen by comparing Matthew 19:17, “If thou wilt enter into life (*zoe*), keep the commandments;” and Matthew 20:28, “Even as the Son of man came... to give his life (*psuche*) a ransom for many.” It was His *psuche* which Jesus laid down while in Revelation 1:18 He says “I am alive (*zao*) for evermore.”

Jesus Christ purchased us so that we might not perish, not so that the faithful do not sleep in death while they rest from their labours.

I have the greatest respect for Dr Thomas and believe his prayer during his threatening shipwreck was answered. He found the truth and preached it for a time but other influences were at work and the truth was not kept. The Scriptures, being inspired of God, contain the truth which has to be searched out prayerfully: it

contains no false doctrines. "Elpis Israel" and "Eureka" contain much of the true teaching of Scripture but some errors have also crept in because the writer was not inspired. It was the inconsistencies which Edward Turney saw in the writings of Dr. Thomas, and no doubt many others saw them too, but Edward Turney was resolved to preach the truth found by Dr Thomas. He reasoned out the truth in a logical fashion which, had Dr, Thomas lived long enough, would have greatly appreciated.

When Dr Thomas said that it was "our misfortune, not our fault, we inherit the consequences of his sin, a defiled, sin stricken nature, mortality," he was wrong, for it was not our misfortune but for blessing that we all should be included under the one sin of Adam that the one Sacrifice of Jesus Christ's life should save all; that in Him we might have life and life more abundantly. The apostle Paul in writing to the Galatians tells us that "the scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Galatians 3:22).

The two ways set before Adam and Eve were the choice of right and wrong. It was God's law which gave this choice. It is obedience to law that God asked of them, in just the same way as He asks obedience of us, Jesus said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Doing wrong does not change one's flesh from good to bad any more than doing right changes one's flesh from bad to good- It is character with which God is concerned; the flesh is of no consequence in this respect.

Brother Colin Hollamby, writing recently in "The Logos" quotes Brother Roberts as saying "It is the nature that sinned in Eden that needed to be redeemed."

This cannot be right, firstly from Robert Roberts own point of view it was the good nature with which Adam was created that sinned so what I suppose he means to say is that it was the nature which it became after sinning was the nature that needed redeeming. Otherwise it was Adam's good nature that needed redeeming from creation.

Secondly, from our view point, it was never our nature that needed redeeming. What Jesus Christ did was purchase us. His life for ours. He redeemed us from the bondage of Sin. Sin in this context being the personification of man's will when opposed to God's will.

A few weeks ago a Christadelphian friend gave me a booklet which I understand has just been published and it is by Brother Harry Tennant. It is called "The Crisis of The Cross of Christ." On page 7 he quotes John 10:15-18, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and 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 power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Of this Brother Tennant says

"There is a wealth of information in those words. Let us restrict ourselves at this time to learning that Christ was commanded of God to give his life for the sheep, and this he would do and it was not the violence of man, but his submission, that took away his life. They would have taken it, but he gave it freely. Therefore his Father loved him."

I challenge anyone to show where, either in this quotation or elsewhere in Scripture, we find Jesus is commanded of God to give His life for the sheep. Some may turn to Philippians 2:8 where we read "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" in support of their view but this does not contain any command for Jesus to give up His own life for the sheep. On the contrary, Jesus said "I lay it down of myself;" "I give my life for the sheep;" "to give his life a ransom..." "my flesh which I give for the life of the world;" "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

No, Jesus Christ gave His own life, His own possession, freely and voluntarily for the life of the world and not because He was commanded to by His Father. No such commandment was ever given and if it was it would detract from His love and compassion for us. He knew His Father's will and that was sufficient for Him. This love He had for us is seen again when He said, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you." To love one another was not a new commandment as Jesus acknowledged when he said that all the law and the prophets hang on the first two commandments, to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great

commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” However, Jesus had said that except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. In this He was speaking of Himself and what He should accomplish on our behalf. If He had not died He would abide for ever without us, and this He could have done because He had lived a sinless life and when His time of probation was accomplished He could have been taken up into heaven and there abide with His Father and the angels. Jesus Christ did not want to go through with the crucifixion; it was not His will, nevertheless, it was for our sakes and not His own that He said to His Father, “Not my will but thine be done.”

So it is that to love one another as He loved us is indeed the new commandment for us for when the time came for Jesus Christ, having completed perfectly His time of probation and was about to be received up into heaven, it was at this time, instead of ascending into heaven He went the extra mile in setting His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem knowing full well what torture would befall Him there, it was at this time He turned the other cheek and was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him - and it was at this time He gave His cloak also, His cloak of righteousness by His sacrifice when He died in our stead.

His own immortality was already assured, He had finished the work His Father had asked of Him, and so these extra things He did were for us, not for Himself.

How then say some that we cannot keep the commandments when Jesus Christ asks us not only to keep them but to go further? “But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek; turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away”

Hard as it may be, was there ever a commandment that it was not possible to keep? Does God or Jesus Christ ask of us the impossible? Would it be just of God to punish us for some wrong we could not help? Absurd thoughts! The Cross speaks of love not punishment; it speaks of reconciliation to God not retribution. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen

Before finishing these notes I wish to refer to a few letters we have received from some of those Christadelphians who appreciate what we are doing, like the one who wrote recently:- “I thank all concerned your end for the very enlightening material I’ve had from you, so understandable, a very far cry from the “clean flesh” theory which I could not understand...” Another who finds it not so easy writes, “...whilst all, or at least most, of what I read makes sense and seems correct I still cannot really get to grips with it. O that someone would simplify the matter, then maybe we could all agree, and change and unite... I have read the reasons several times and find everything quite plausible, I still cannot fully get my mind round it. I will keep trying - I promise!” Another wrote, “I recently had come into my possession by way of a loan a number of publications in respect of the Nazarene fellowship... I have to return them shortly and will not have adequate time to read and digest them fully before I do so... I am therefore writing to request you send me by return one copy of each title...” And another, “Thank you for the literature -- I find it most informative... Would you please let me have copies of the following...” Yet another, “It does appear there is another viewpoint compared to what is accepted and, dare I say it, taken for granted by Christadelphians in general - right or wrong!”

It is letters like these that make everything so worthwhile and give us immeasurable strength to continue.

While going through these letters I came across one from about twelve months ago in which the writer asks for a copy of our Statement of Faith, which of course we do not have. In my reply I wrote “In case it is of help to you at present I will set out here a few observations which I believe to be true.” I repeat them here in case they are of help to others -

1. Natural death is not the penalty for sin.

2. Adam and Eve did not suffer the penalty for their sin, that is, the penalty “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” was not carried out.

3. The flesh of Adam and Eve was not changed in any way by, nor as a result of their sin; that is, there is no sin-in-the-flesh.

4. The sacrifices for sin in the Scriptures were substitutionary.

5. If natural death were the penalty for sin, why did Jesus Christ suffer a violent death?

6. If natural death is the penalty for our sins, where does forgiveness fit in? That is, if we are forgiven our sins why are we still punished for them?

7 If Jesus Christ suffered for our sins in our stead then He has the right if He chooses to forgive us.

8. Adam had his life direct from God and this life has been passed down from father to child to this day.

9. The exception being that Jesus Christ also had His life direct from God.

10. When Adam sinned he lost the close relationship he had with God. All his posterity are born into this estranged state.

11. Jesus Christ kept His relationship with His Father by being sinless -

12. Jesus Christ took Adam’s place in death - “The Just for the unjust.”

Russell Gregory