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Editorial

Dear Friends, Loving Greetings.

A little while ago a very dear friend remarked to me in a letter that it had struck him that of Paul's great three, faith, hope and charity, we often hear or read about faith and love but forget the middle one, hope. With this in mind I decided to check my concordance to see how many times "hope" is mentioned in the Bible. It is 128 times. 69 times in the Old Testament and 59 in the New Testament. Jesus is recorded as only having mentioned hope once - in Luke 6:34, when He is instructing His disciples on their behaviour to others: "And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye?"

Paul is the person who teaches us the supreme importance of hope. In his letters and discourses he uses the word 53 times. In Romans he tells us, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen in not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for." So then our life of faith is based on hope. Peter says we are "to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the hope that is in you..."

Jesus is the personification of hope, the Hope of Israel, the Redeemer of the world and the author of salvation. Even in our ordinary day to day life we constantly live in hope, it springs eternal in the human breast as the poet Alexander Pope rightly observed. We hope that the sun will shine tomorrow if we are going out and if we feel unwell we hope to get better soon. Gardeners especially are a hopeful breed. The hours spent planting seeds and tending a garden are all dependent on hope. Generally that hope is borne of experience. The flowers, vegetables and fruits that the seed produced last year fed us and delighted us, and so we have no reason not to hope for more of the same again.

So it is with our hope in Jesus. We know that He died and rose again from the dead and if we do as He commands we have every reason to hope and trust that we and those we have loved and for the time being lost, will do the same.

David's Psalms are strong in hope too. There are 22 mentions of hope in his outpourings, "For in thee, O Lord, do I hope... Let Israel hope in the Lord... But I hope in his words."

There is no doubt then that our hope has a strong and sure foundation, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."

All that has been promised will come to pass and until that time we must put on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

With love to all, Helen Brady

In response to my letter to Mark Robertson reviewing his booklet “The Legacy of Eden”, published in our last Circular letter, we have received the following:

Dear Brother Gregory, Thank you for sending me... your review of my booklet “The Legacy of Eden.” I am always glad to receive feedback on things I have written and I found your comments interesting. I was a little surprised that a 42 page booklet should merit such a lengthy review (or commentary, as you call it). There are one or two points I would like to reply to. You may in places have misunderstood what I was trying to say, or perhaps I was not expressing my thoughts very clearly. For example you take me to task for omitting to mention that union with Christ means baptism, rather than just to “come forward at some Evangelical Church and consider oneself ‘saved’.” In fact I concluded that section with the words: “The difference (between Adam and Christ) is that Christ’s people find union in him not by physical descent, but by baptism, in which his people die with him to sin, and are raised to life in him...”(p.32). Perhaps you missed that detail. I said nothing about coming forward at an evangelical Church nor do I believe such a response to Christ to be at all adequate.

Your chief criticism however, seems to be that I rejected the doctrine of original sin as defined by the Augustinian tradition yet then embraced that same doctrine “with all its awful ramifications.” This is surely an exaggeration. The “awful ramifications” of the doctrine of original sin are ‘total depravity,’ inherited guilt, double predestination etc., none of which I endorsed. As I tried to explain, human nature is the same now as it was in the beginning, that is, we have been given a choice between obedience and disobedience and therefore a capacity to commit evil. Our obedience would be of no value to God if we did not have an equal capacity to disobey. However, that is not the same as saying that God implanted an evil component, a *depravatio* in the human heart which had not been there in the beginning. Nor do I accept that we inherit the guilt for the actions of a distant ancestor.

The many questions which arise from a study of the ‘Fall’ do not lend themselves to easy answers. For this reason I gave a brief survey of the attempts of writers and thinkers of past ages to account for the existence of evil in human life: the Rabbis and their speculations about a ‘*yetzer ha-ra*’, Augustine’s notion of a *depravatio* implanted by God, his controversy with Pelagius, Calvin’s revival of Augustinian’s grim theology. I thought it might be of interest for readers to know how Jewish and Christian thinkers in the past have tackled the problem of evil. I also made it clear where I did not agree with these speculations. I am sorry that this attempt at a historical survey gave the impression that the writer “spent a lot of time airing his knowledge of theology to little effect than telling us what he knows.” I’m sure the same charge could be made against many writers.

It seems to me that the problem with all these attempts to explain the origin of sin is that sin, by definition, is misuse of freewill. Therefore the moment we point to a factor outside our control, and which makes us act in a certain way - whether it be a *depravatio* placed in the heart by God, a *yetzar ha-ra*, the promptings of a personal devil, or genetic programming - then we effectively remove personal responsibility for our actions. We can then blame something other than our own decisions. If we are programmed to sin then our behaviour is no longer the outworking of our own freedom, in fact it is no longer sin because we cannot be held responsible for what we are predetermined to do. As a matter of fact we are free, but we continually misuse that freedom, even though we might deplore our lapses. Sin is as mysterious as human freewill. It is simply there, an aspect of human behaviour.

When I wrote on page 12 that “we sin inevitably and yet are responsible for our sinning” I was commenting on the paradox of the human situation. No one, apart from the Son of God, has broken free from the grip of sin, as many passages of Scripture remind us, at the same time we sin by a free choice and must therefore be held responsible for our actions. You raise the question: “What does this say about the

God whom we serve if He has made us so that we sin inevitably and then blames us for it?" Your question implies an injustice on God's part for creating such a situation. I would say that the essence of the Gospel is that despite our best intentions, we do sin inevitably and continually, but God's response is not simply to blame us for our sin, but to forgive us when we repent. It would be interesting to know your answer to your own rhetorical question. Are you suggesting that by an act of the will we can refrain from sinning – or that God does not blame the sinner if the temptations from within his heart are too strong for him to overcome?

On the same subject, you make the optimistic claim "There is no bias towards sin in our flesh." If by the term "bias towards sin" you mean the notion that God implanted a depravity to make us worse than our first ancestors then I would agree. Nevertheless personal experience surely tells us that it is a lot easier to act selfishly than virtuously. Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the badness of which the heart is capable. The Apostle devotes a large part of Romans 7 to his own inability to attain moral perfection despite his best efforts: "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not..." (vs.18,19). Something in the nature of the Apostle, which he called "the flesh" pulled him down and prevented him from offering the obedience which he desperately desired to make.

You express the hope that I might see that "if we really have (sin in the flesh) then it was implanted by God and thus makes God responsible for our sin." Again this depends on what we mean by "sin in the flesh." If we mean a depravity or corruption that predisposes us to be worse than man was originally constituted then I would agree that it would be incongruous that a loving God would even want to implant such an evil component in our nature. I would also agree with you that the only reference in the Scriptures to "sin in the flesh" is a passage telling us that Christ overcame sin while he was in the flesh, not that "sin in the flesh" is a corruption in our or His nature. However, what we do have within our nature is a bundle of desires, complexes and instincts which Paul calls "the flesh" which were implanted by God and present a continual source of temptation, but no one claims that this makes God responsible for our sin. He has also given us free will to rise above our lower nature.

Let me elaborate on this. My explanation (on page 36) for why sin seems to be the stronger element in our nature was that these "lusts of the flesh" are natural impulses, essential to physical survival. On their own they are morally neutral. However, they press in upon our attention all the time and demand gratification, so that we cannot escape their demands. The will of God, by contrast, is separate from us and can easily be ignored. We have to make an effort to obey it. Therefore "the flesh," while in one sense morally neutral, will continually override our desire to obey God. It is the use to which we put our natural desires which decides whether they are good or evil. If we put their gratification before obedience to the will of God then they become a source of evil. Apart from that there is nothing inherently evil in human there is no longer a barrier between us and Him then the impulses of the flesh will no longer have the upper hand. That was my conclusion, and I am disappointed that you did not comment on it to say whether you agreed or not.

Can I explain a point that you evidently found confusing: "One thing that even God cannot create is a morally perfect being." Your answer to this is: "moral perfection requires perfect obedience and one who is perfectly obedient is morally perfect." Of course he is. But his obedience must be his own choice. God cannot make it for him. When I wrote that God cannot create a morally perfect creature I meant - and the context should have made this clear - that moral perfection cannot be imposed on a creature by divine fiat. If God created a being in a state of moral perfection then He would have an automaton. It would not be moral perfection. Only if such a creature has the choice whether to obey or not can he attain moral perfection. I did not mean that God cannot lead us to perfection. But the process must involve co-operation between creature and Creator.

You then make the claim "It is our understanding that perfect obedience, or moral perfection is possible here and now," simply on the ground that Jesus, who bore the same nature as ourselves was morally perfect. I can understand your logic, but the claim seems to me excessively optimistic. It is certainly not an idea found in Scripture and it flies in the face of daily experience. Jesus had the same nature as us, but He also had a relationship with His Father which we do not have. He had a character different from us. We strive, by God's grace to attain moral perfection here and now, but as 1 John 1:8 clearly tells us: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." In the previous sentence however, you say: "Even

when we have done all things well we are still unprofitable servants.” That is certainly the reality of our present situation, although I am sure that if in this life we could attain the ‘perfect obedience and moral perfection’ that you claim is possible, then we would no longer be unprofitable servants.

One or two other points need clarifying. On the subject of moral perfection, you clearly disagree with my understanding of the status of Adam and Eve when I tried to describe the difference that came over them. I don’t doubt that there was a measure of responsibility and the possibility of pain in Eden. I am sure too that Adam’s Creator would have been displeased had he neglected his duties to tend the garden. However Scripture does not go into such hypothetical details. My main point was that Adam and Eve began not in a state of moral perfection, but moral neutrality, or innocence. I used the analogy of children leaving the comparative safety and protection of the nursery and entering the vaster and more hostile world of the adult. Just as children must leave the nursery if they are to face the responsibilities of adulthood, so humanity had to leave Eden if its members were to grow into maturity. I reached this conclusion on my own, not because I am Robert Roberts’ parrot, I am not acquainted with his writings on this subject. I never parrot anyone.

Many writers have grappled with the problem of the death sentence which was pronounced against Adam and Eve, but which was not carried out “in the day” that they transgressed. Various answers have been suggested, but unfortunately I have never read the booklet called “The Meaning and Usage of Muth Temuth and B’Yom” nor have I read an article by the Unamended Christadelphians with its greater detail, so I cannot comment on them. Again on the subject of Eden, you take issue with my statement that “symbolism does not always conform to our notions of logic” (p21). I was dealing with the somewhat ambiguous position of the Tree of Life in the narrative and the questions it raises. If Adam and Eve had continually to eat from it in order to maintain immortal life, then why the urgency to expel them before they could eat any more from it? What difference would one more bite make? If, on the other hand, they had not yet eaten from it then why not? Was it too forbidden? Would one bite really have granted immortality, and would the Elohim really have been unable to reverse such a situation? Why did they need the fruit of a tree to keep them immortal if that immortality depended upon a right relationship with God? What was the point of the Tree of Life? The various elements in the narrative do not seem to hold together. Your quotations from Matthew 13:13 and 7:7 do not really clarify the issue. I know that the purpose of symbolic language and parable is to explain divine truth to those who search. Indeed I hope that my heart has not “waxed gross” even so, I must admit that I am puzzled by this part of the story. You clearly disagreed with my observations, so it is a pity that you did not offer to throw some light on the problem. I would have been interested to hear some solutions.

Another misunderstanding: my statement on page 23 that “there is no clear dividing line between good and evil” - was part of a general observation that throughout history evil has often been a misdirection of virtue or that people have done wicked things with apparently good motives. Inquisitors burned heretics for the good of their souls, warmongers appealed to the virtues of self-sacrifice, loyalty and patriotism, Pharisees despised those around them out of their desire to live by a high moral standard, etc. I do not deny that in the light of divine revelation there is a clear dividing line between good and evil; I was only making the point that so much of mankind have blurred that distinction or as the Apostle puts it: “Satan is transformed into an angel of light.”

When I wrote that “Augustine derived the doctrine of original sin from the Apostle Paul” I did not mean that Paul held to that doctrine in its fully developed form. I meant only that it was an interpretation of Paul’s writings. Paul wrote that by Adam’s disobedience sin and death came upon all men, but did not state the mechanism by which this was so. Augustine and others tried with varying degrees of plausibility to answer the questions raised by Romans 5 and 2 Corinthians 15. You find it a “strange claim” that I should write on page 29 that the Apostle Paul is the only writer in the New Testament to make specific mention of Adam as the culprit who brought ruin upon mankind. If other New Testament writers referred to the subject, then I would be glad to be told where.

I was surprised at your novel interpretation of the parable of the Prodigal Son. If I understand you correctly, you are claiming that Jesus “was the older brother who served his Father all these years and never disobeyed.” Surely not. The older brother was thoroughly resentful that the father had forgiven his wayward younger brother. His complaint: “You never gave me so much as a kid that I might make merry with my

friends” - hardly sounds like the words of Jesus to His Father. The older brother had indeed served his father many years, but with a sterile and unloving obedience. He represents the Pharisaic mentality referred to at the beginning of the chapter “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2).

I may have misunderstood your meaning, but reading through your commentary I have come to the conclusion that your position is similar to that of Pelagius, the opponent of St. Augustine, who held that if God has commanded us to be perfect, then perfection must be within our capacity, otherwise God would be acting unfairly in commanding the impossible. I would say once again that this does not fit either personal experience or the teaching of Scripture.

I am grateful to you for raising some of the issues. If there is ever a reprint of “The Legacy of Eden” then, in the light of your comments I shall rephrase, expand or clarify some of my statements. However, I do not feel the need to adopt a different viewpoint on anything I have written.

Your Brother in Christ, Mark Robertson.

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My Reply:

Dear Brother Robertson, Thank you your response to my commentary of your booklet “The Legacy of Eden.” It was with a feeling of great relief that I read much of what you had to say by way of explanation. Especially so with regard to Romans 8:3 where we read of “sin in the flesh” and you agree it refers to Jesus who overcame sin while He was in the flesh. This verse has been a great stumbling block for Christadelphians and it is good to see that many of them now see “sin-in-the-flesh” for the nonsense it is; that it is neither a disease in nor a corruption of our physical nature.

Again, I am pleased to see that you so completely reject the Augustinian tradition with all its awful ramifications and I am sorry I misunderstood you.

We are also in agreement over the fact that it can be very much easier to follow our self-will than to obey God’s will, and for this reason - the greatness of the reward. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4), but Jesus did - for the joy set before Him. The opportunity of sharing that eternal joy with our Saviour is not lightly given. “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13,14).

Yes, indeed I am “suggesting that by an act of the will we can refrain from sinning.” I claim that perfect obedience, or moral perfection, is possible but you say, twice: “It is certainly not an idea found in Scripture and it flies in the face of daily experience.” It most certainly flies in the face of daily experience for most of mankind but I disagree with your claim that the idea is not found in Scripture! Jesus said, “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John 15:13,14). Again Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48). And again Jesus said: “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7:17). Yet again He said: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,” (Matthew 5:8). Paul said; “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1). Again Paul said: “I can do all things through Jesus Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13). James said: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7). In all these references there is no expectation of failure; they are put forward as possible and required achievements. And there is more. Jesus said: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:34). What was new about this commandment when the first two commandments of the Law of Moses were to love God and love one’s neighbour? What was new was that Jesus not only kept the law perfectly but in His love for us He did more than the law required - He laid down His life for us and there was no law requiring that Jesus should do so. He is asking here that we not only keep the law perfectly but that we too should do more than the law requires.

It follows then that it is a false claim to say that we sin inevitably. We do not! We sin because we do not try hard enough to overcome temptation and that, I would say, is because we do not ask in prayer for the help we need and is offered. “For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18). While Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:13, wrote: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Jesus condemned sin by overcoming all temptation in the same flesh and blood as the rest of mankind. He overcame temptation by the same means as we can. He proved to us that it could be done. If He could do it then so can we. Thus it is just that we should be condemned when we fail. The fact that we can escape that condemnation is due entirely to the love of Jesus Christ in being our Redeemer through whom we have forgiveness.

It is therefore a mistake to attribute Christ’s perfection to the fact that God was His Father. I agree that “He had a relationship with His Father which we do not have” but it was that relationship which put Jesus in the strong position to save us when we were in the weak position of slavery to Master Sin; of being under condemnation. Jesus was never under condemnation.

You also said that if indeed we achieved perfect obedience then we would not be unprofitable servants but profitable. But you misunderstand our position. We cannot be profitable to God in any way. We were slaves belonging to Sin before we became slaves belonging to God through being bought by Jesus Christ. But our perfection is no more than He asks. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10).

Yet in all this we are not saved by our works but by faith lest any man should boast.

In the 5th paragraph of your letter you say: “No one, apart from the Son of God has broken free from the grip of Sin...” But Jesus did not break free from the grip of sin. He was never at any time in the grip of sin – except perhaps for the moment when He said “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me” but even this is doubtful for that moment was of His own choosing - the moment He died for the Sin of the world; for that moment only could we say that Jesus was in the grip of sin - but He put Himself there for our sakes. May I explain my understanding more fully. Jesus was born the Son of God in order that He should have a new life direct from the source of all Life. This new life gave Jesus a life like ours but which was not concluded under the sin of Adam. It was a life free from the condemnation under which all Adam’s descendants are born. The Gospel message is that we can break free from this condemnation by walking “not after the flesh, but after the spirit,” Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”

You continue by saying: “No one... has broken free from the grip of sin, as many passages of Scripture remind us.” But these “many passages of Scripture” do not refer to our inability to behave perfectly, but to our position ‘in Adam.’ And being found ‘in Adam’ we are persuaded to come out of Adam and be ‘in Christ’ and walk after the Spirit.

I think the Tree of Life becomes something of a problem if we try to fit in too many details but maybe this helps: personally I see Jesus Christ as our Tree of Life’ and while we partake of Him in spirit day by day, remaining faithful and obedient, then we too look forward to life for evermore. In this respect I see our obedience to the commands of Christ to be equivalent to partaking of our Tree of Life; and the parallel thought being therefore is that while Adam and Eve were obedient, they were, likewise partaking of the Tree of Life in Eden. Regarding the eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil I see this as being equivalent to disobedience. One may ask ‘Why then were there the two trees?’ To me they epitomise the law given to Adam and Eve, the law which gave them the choice to obey or disobey, along with the results of either choice - everlasting life or everlasting death. This idea may not suit all but it is all too easy to get side-tracked and end up getting nowhere.

I would not have thought my understanding of the parable of the Prodigal Son was all that novel. It was suggested to me many years ago while a Christadelphian during a Sunday morning service. I find it fits

the story better than the more conventional view which you express. The narrative tells us that the elder son was obedient to his father and this could not be said of the Pharisees. And the point I made was that Jesus could have responded in such a way as the elder son in the parable, but chose not to. This is suggested by Jesus saying: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." The connection being that Jesus did not have to 'fall into the ground and die' for us; He would still have received inheritance as the Son of God but would abide alone; but as you say, "He had a character different from us," a character which He Himself built, and went along with His Father's wishes for the sake of His 'younger brother' - us.

When I wrote that you made the strange claim that "the Apostle Paul is the only new testament writer to make specific mention of Adam as the culprit who brought ruin upon mankind" I was referring to the "ruin upon mankind" as being the strange claim. At worst, Adam brought ruin only upon himself and even that was taken away in the mercy of God. The truth of the matter is that far from Adam bringing ruin upon mankind, mankind has ever since been blessed with the opportunity of forgiveness which was not originally mentioned to Adam and Eve before their transgression.

Another strange statement: "Sin is as mysterious as human freewill." I have often thought people love mysteries rather than plain truth. There could be no sin without law and law gives choice. We have been given freewill to choose whether to keep the law or not. There is no "mystery"?

I thank you once again for your letter and hope these extra observations will be accepted in the spirit of love in the Lord,

Your brother in the Hope of life for evermore,

Russell Gregory

Some Important Points of Doctrine to be Considered

St. Paul in his Epistle to the converts in Rome who were conversant with the Law given to Moses and its being superseded through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, speaks of Sin personified as a Master in whose service under the "Law of sin and death" they had been previously sold into bondage through the sin of Adam being imputed to them by the Creator on a federal principle (Romans 5:18), see the contrast in verses 19, 20 and 21, the condemnation of the many is not by their personal disobedience but as imputed members of Adam's body while in his loins when he sinned. Thus when, by our personal actions of belief and faith we die in symbolic baptism into the death of Christ we become imputed members of His body and constituted righteous.

Let it be understood, St. Paul is not speaking of, nor teaching physical descent or inheritance in the case of Adam or Jesus. He shows that it is Law which governs the position man finds himself in by enlightenment, and either he accepts the way out or chooses to remain a servant of Sin. Now going on into chapter 6 Paul is showing how the servants of Sin as a Master have, through the death of Christ, been made free, the Ransom (His life) having been paid to satisfy the debt owed to the Law which Adam violated in Eden, a debt also imputed to us while in his loins and not by personal disobedience; sin is not imputed personally until under Law.

Now Romans chapter 7 becomes another important part of Paul's teaching of being made free by a death but yet alive. He now speaks of the law how that it had dominion over a man as long as he liveth, and also the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth, but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. Now we find Paul leading up to a position of law under Christ having given an allegorical example of a re-marriage to a new husband after her first husband's death has made her free from the law binding them to one another.

St. Paul takes his lesson from Adam and Eve's relationship in the Garden of Eden when God declared them twain yet one flesh. Therefore St. Paul likens true believers in Christ as being Joined in marriage to a husband through a binding covenant of relationship of one flesh. The one flesh in Eden was as God created it, very good, and Joined them together in that same flesh; Jesus told the Jewish rulers this very fact - that the

very good nature which God had joined together they should not put asunder – proving that their nature was the equivalent to that He had created from the dust - very good.

Physically defiled, condemned, sinful flesh is not therefore what Jesus was speaking of, how could He when it did not exist? But there are people who believe it does exist and that they are partakers of it in physical content. They mistakenly believe from Paul's discourse in Romans that their flesh is condemned as a result of Adam's sin and physically inherited, yet profess to be new creatures through belief and baptism into Christ yet still subjects of condemned, unclean flesh in which dwelleth no good thing and still subject to death, the death that, they suppose, passed upon Adam who had already been created subject to the death common to all animal species dependent on the breath of life.

Can this really be the position of true believers? Paul certainly gives a superior difference of being in Christ than this.

Paul likens true believers as being joined in marriage to Jesus through a binding covenant of relationship of one flesh. Can anyone accept a position of being unclean, defiled, condemned nature, yet claim to be one flesh with a glorified Son of God and High-Priest at the Right-Hand of the Father? Surely the twain differ in flesh with the law of Master Sin still dwelling in the members instead of the Law of Christ, the new Husband and Master of His Bride, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh both legally and morally what God hath joined together?

The lesson to learn is that all human flesh is physically the same from the creation. The correct term used by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:3 applied to ownership or possession. This, as was pointed out recently by Bro. Russell Gregory, was why Paul in the case of the flesh in which Jesus was born and came, was forced to use the word "likeness" though being of the same quality of the physical flesh as all other men who were "Sin's flesh" that is, flesh owned by Sin. Jesus belonged to His Father, God, and needed not to be purchased from Master Sin. The phrase "Sinful character" can be used in the case of transgressors of Divine Law but not "sinful flesh." Righteousness and unrighteousness can exist in a person of the same quality of flesh; the only thing affected is character in the sight of God.

The Mount of Transfiguration of Christ revealed to His disciples that Moses and Elijah were not so important to them to remain with them, for there came a voice from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." So as Jesus had said, "The law and the prophets were until John and since then the Kingdom of God is preached." Therefore when I heed the voice from heaven saying "Hear ye him" I read His words whether direct or in His parables and I find nothing of the teaching of "condemned flesh," "sinful flesh," "sin in the flesh," "defiled nature, sinfully inclined, changed in consequence of Adam's sin to a process of natural decay ending in death and adjudged unworthy of immortality." If these descriptions of human physical flesh were true and transmitted, as a certain doctrinal clause states, transmitted to all Adam's posterity, where can the preaching of the Kingdom of God have a place in the minds of those who accept and believe such false teaching?

Read Matthew 11:11 to 14 regarding the above -

"Verily I say unto you. Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."

Then read what Paul says regarding the spiritual relationship and position of the Corinthian believers including himself as being members of the Body of Christ – 1 Corinthians 6:14 to 20;-

"God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commiteth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye

not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

In this and other declarations made by Paul such as Romans 14:14, :-

"I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

Those who have read and misinterpreted Paul's statements, example Romans 7, have many facts to face.

A magazine entitled "Shofar" meaning and signifying to Old Testament Israel, a call or a warning as circumstances require, is being circulated by a certain group of Christadelphians in America who do not claim adherence to the B.A.S.F. as a correct document and basic teaching of the Apostolic Faith. It may surprise many that the Editors are sounding the Trumpet of warning to their readers in an effort to explore the Word of God "with all readiness of mind" not accepting without proof all that has been handed down as truth by tradition.

As Nazarenes we have corresponded with the Editors in an open and friendly manner and find them accepting some important facts of our teaching, for example that Clean flesh" was never a doctrine held by Edward Turney, who believed in 1873 that the flesh of Jesus and all other men was physically the same from creation until now, excluding the fact of course, that Jesus at His resurrection was incorruptible flesh and one energised by the Spirit Power of God. Also that our view on the penalty for sin dam incurred was not a slow process of decay ending in death but as stated by the Creator, "death in the day thou eatest." The one being a judicial sentence, the other a result of mercy and typical redemption provisional until the antitypical offering and sacrifice was fulfilled in Christ, the Lamb of God.

Throughout the magazine there is awareness now that the tradition and much of the teaching of their pioneers has been contradictory and mistaken not only in regard to Adam's sin and penalty, but on present day judgment before resurrection of the just and unjust. On my part I cannot entertain for a moment Dr. Thomas' theory of either judgments taking place on Mount Sinai. My booklet "Raised to Life" will confirm this.

Perhaps readers should ask themselves: "Into what death was I immersed symbolically - that of bloodshedding, or - that of decay and death of a sinner, which Jesus did not experience for Adam or us?"

There is no doubt Jesus was a substitute in the place of Adam by the shedding of blood in order that Adam could continue to live out his appointed time as a corruptible human being from creation, that he might reproduce a people to populate the earth from which, by the blood of Christ, God might select a people for His Name.

We should therefore realise that all true converts know and understand what is involved in the Atoning work of God in Christ Jesus, and also accept what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."

Considering verses 3 to 11 why all the confused sects and denominations in the world? It is the result of following the precepts of uninspired men instead of seeking Truth through prayer to God and His word which He has magnified above all His Name.

We therefore commend the efforts of the Editors of "Shofar" that its readers will come to understand the true position of belief in One God, One Body, and One Spirit, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. Amen

Brother Phil Parry.

Rev. Dr. Dennis Duncan, writing in The Telegraph on the 25th January 2003 on the subject of

Dry Bones

The institution “church” is in major decline. It is not necessarily levels of spirituality or concern with “the things that are eternal” that are decreasing. It is the organisation church itself. Both the churches in which I ministered in Scotland are now sheltered housing or hostels for the homeless. In the area in which the latter was set there are now, in place of 10 churches, two churches. Many congregations (not all, of course, as there are notable exceptions) are tiny, old and without children. Dr. Hutchison Whiteford, a senior minister of the Church of Scotland, stated last week that there are some 840 ministers aged over 45 in that branch of the church, and some 240 under 45.

Push the years on by 20 and the picture tells its own story. The bones are very dry, to quote the prophet Ezekiel in his vision of the valley of dry bones. Can these bones live? Ezekiel has three things to say in this desolate situation. The first is difficult. God demands that Ezekiel “prophesies.” But how do we do it?

Perhaps it is best to turn “prophecy” into “speak.” You must speak out for God, he is saying. You must make clear the divine will and the divine ways. All too often the voice of the Church is a muted one, expressing consensus, sometimes nearer to the lowest common denominator than the heights of prophecy. If the dry bones are to live, there must be some clear interpretation of God’s will offered to the world.

The two other factors in bringing new life to the dry bones are clear. The first is that the people must “hear the word of the Lord.” The other is that a new gift of the Spirit will be given: “I will put my Spirit upon you and you shall live.” These are two matters that are central to the emergence of a new church.

The church must have a biblical theology. The Word of God, the record of the revelation of God’s love first through the Old Testament and then in the radical presence of Jesus, must be the focus and authority of a renewed church. Then there must be a recognition of the importance of life in the Spirit. However many organisations the church has, however good its social and leisure life, the first task of the church is to develop the spiritual life of its members.

It could be that the purpose of God today is to dismantle a structure and style that have served well for many generations and to resurrect the essence of the church as a body given to declaration of the will of God, holding as its solid base the Word of God and a fellowship dedicated to help people live “in the Spirit.”

The dry bones in Ezekiel’s time stood up, resurrected and alive. A renewed church can, equally, rise out of the presently dry bones of our time and, as the prophet Haggai reminds us, be greater than the old one.

Dr. Dennis Duncan.

* * *

Sister Helen Brady wrote to Dr. Duncan in response to the above article as follows:-

I always greatly enjoy your spiritual contributions to the Telegraph on Saturdays. Never more so than the one that appeared on January 25th called “DRY BONES”.

You say “The church must have a Biblical theology... the first task of the church is to develop the spiritual life of its members.”

How I agree with this. But it hardly seems a possibility for church theology is too dependent on tradition, much of biblical theology or teaching is foreign to the church. For instance infant christening and confirmation. This is not biblical teaching. Christ Himself was not baptised until the beginning of His ministry when He must have been at least 30 years old.

Then there is the church's insistence on the Trinity. Also an utterly alien concept to the first disciples and indeed to any Bible student worth their salt. You rightly draw attention to the importance of the Old Testament, and there are the true roots of Christianity and monotheism is what we find in its chapters not a trinity of gods. "The Lord your God is ONE God."

Then there is the church's teaching in the 35 articles at least, of heaven and hell. I don't hear it preached from the pulpit but it is certainly a belief that is alive and well in many of the congregation of the church I have visited. These are not "places" to which people go according to Scripture.

Nor is the concept of Original Sin to be found in the Bible. It is a tradition invented by St Augustine. It only takes a little thought to realize that if there is such a thing as sin actually dwelling in our flesh, God must have put it there and what loving father would do that? It would also put paid to the notion of free will and to the idea that we can with God's help keep all the 10 Commandments. "Be ye perfect..."

I am sure you will gather that the Bible is the only fount of all wisdom for me.

I have little patience with man made tradition. I believe in the Federal Principle of redemption and salvation. When we become aware that we descend from Adam and because of his sin we are legally alienated from God; we are as Paul says, "In Adam" but we can remove ourselves from this hopeless and alienated state by recognising that Christ died the death due to Adam, and by baptism, a symbol of Christ's death we can be saved from eternal death, "As in Adam all die so in Christ all are made alive."

It is clear that if, as we could and should, obey all the Commandments we are still in need of God's grace and this is offered to us by way of the redemptive death of Christ. He died instead of Adam, paying the penalty incurred in Eden and inherited by all humanity. Christ's sacrifice opens the way to our Salvation and life eternal in Christ's Kingdom here on earth when He comes a second time.

I expect you get many letters from religious crackpots and you probably think I am another of that ilk! But I felt impelled to write a few lines to you about what I believe to be the true Gospel. But I won't try your patience any further.

I send my good wishes and I look forward to reading some more from you in the future.

Helen Brady

FURTHER COMMENTS **ON THE Nov. and Dec. 2002 "Christadelphian"**

The editor of the magazine, Michael Ashton, no doubt alarmed by the many defections from the various Logos ecclesias currently troubling his magazine readership has chosen to reproduce the lecture given first by John Carter in Melbourne, Australia, in 1958 on the Atonement in two parts. The first address is headed "Sin That Dwelleth In Me" (Romans 7:20) which John Carter then surrounds with the usual Christadelphian verbiage to derive the conclusion that all flesh is sinful, that we are born with a bias to sin which we cannot escape. The quotation (in context) is as follows, v.19: "For the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me, I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

As we have pointed out before, the whole of this passage from v-14 to the end of the chapter, including John Carter's quotation, beginning with the words in v.14 "I am carnal" should properly have been translated in the English past tense if the translators had not been misled by the universal Christian error of 'Original Sin' or 'Original Guilt;' because Paul is describing in these verses a completed situation before he was baptised, before he "put on Christ," before he was transferred from the (Edenic/Mosaic) law of sin and death, into the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, and has arisen because the translators, like John Carter, at

the time, all believed in the false doctrine of 'Original Sin' or 'Original Guilt' and chose to ignore the differences between our English time orientated verb tense system and the Greek completed or uncompleted verb tense system.

The man who could assert in Romans chapter 5 that both he himself and the Roman Christians had been "justified by faith," and were "at peace with God," the man who "gloried in tribulations," the man into whose "heart the Holy Spirit had shed the love of God," who had been "justified by the blood of Christ" and "saved from wrath by Jesus Christ," the man who could, "having been reconciled to God" and now "rejoiced in God through the Lord Jesus, by whom he had received the atonement" (Romans 5:1-11) could not possibly in chapter 7 confess he still possessed that "law of sin in his members" and was still "in captivity to the law" as Christadelphians still blasphemously blatantly teach, nor could he have followed that reference to his pre-baptismal situation in chapter 8, verse 2 with the assertion that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made him free" from that earlier law of sin and death if he still possessed the earlier law, nor would he have said in Romans 15:14, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Michael Ashton is simply being dishonest in reproducing John Carter's false teaching as he very well knows.

If we do have a "bias to sin," if we are as the Christadelphian Statement of Faith claims, born with such a bias to sin, then it must be God who put it there, and therefore God must be responsible for our sinfulness. When Jesus taught "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect" then that also must be untrue, if we have such a natural physical bias to sin as John Carter asserts without proof.

Mortal means 'liable to death;' corruptible means 'capable of corruption.' And Paul asserts that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53) and that is how Adam was created, a natural corruptible animal who would have died in any case, as he actually did, when he came to the end of his natural 930 year span of life. If John Carter was correct, why does David in Psalm 14:5 claim that "God is in the generation of the righteous"? Was God in those generations who died because of sin? No man or woman has ever been born with a 'bias to sin.' Jesus said, "I have overcome the world." He did not say as Christadelphians like to think "I have overcome that bias to sin in my flesh." It was the world and its wickedness and evil and all its temptations that Jesus overcame when He voluntarily paid the price that Adam could not, because Adam had sold himself and all his progeny into the bondage of Sin, or Satan, the Devil. As a "near kinsman" Jesus redeemed the human race from that bondage, and for those who believe on him and are baptised into His death (properly baptised, not into the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19), then there is hope of that first resurrection. God is not mocked, remember the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath day? Beware of teaching for doctrines the commandments of men such as Robert Roberts!

1600 years ago when the British monk Pelagius was opposing Augustine of Hippo (who introduced the false doctrine of 'Original Sin' or 'Original Guilt' into Christendom), he wrote:

"Instead of regarding the commands of our illustrious Lord as a privilege... we cry out at God in the scornful sloth of our hearts, and say, 'This is too hard and difficult. We cannot do it. We are only human, and hindered by the weakness of the flesh (Blind folly and presumptuous blasphemy!). We ascribe to the God of knowledge the guilt of twofold ignorance of His own creation, and ignorance of His own commands. As if, forgetting the weakness of men, His own creation, He has laid upon men commands which they were unable to bear, and at the same time (God forgive us!) we ascribe to the Just One unrighteousness, and cruelty to the Holy One, the first by complaining that He has commanded the impossible, the second by imagining that a man will be condemned by Him for what he could not help, so that (the blasphemy of it!) God is thought of as seeking our punishment rather than our salvation. No one knows the extent of our strength better than He who gave us that strength. He has not willed to command anything impossible, for He is righteous, and He will not condemn a man for what he could not help, for He is holy."

It would seem that even in 412 AD there were a few who recognised the Truth, and although Pelagius was supported by two synods in Antioch, Augustine had the ear of the Pope and Emperor and eventually prevailed; his false teachings were incorporated into Christendom, for men love darkness rather than light.

Nor is it any surprise that Paul goes on immediately in Romans to assert “There is therefore now no condemnation (Greek: *katakrima* = down judgment) to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” If Paul was free from the law of sin and death, what becomes of the Christadelphian supposition that we all have a “bias to sin”? The fact is that when Paul in Romans 5:12 declares that “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” the death to which the apostle is referring is not our natural death, but ‘judicial’ death as the legal wages of transgression, as the fate of Koran and company foreshadowed, and when he says that “all have sinned” he is referring to that legal imputation of transgression by the righteous Judge who “hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all” and as the apostle says in Romans 4 concerning Abraham: “Being fully persuaded that what God hath promised he was able also to perform.” And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Perhaps it is because John Carter in his overseas tours last century succeeded in effecting the subsequent (fudged) re-union by double speaking in both Australia and America (he was bitterly accused on his return of speaking ‘clean flesh’ to the Advocate and Unamended fellowships of those countries) and causing them to believe that the B.A.S.F. did not really mean what it plainly teaches, that Michael Ashton hopes it might work again as more and more young people become disenchanted with tradition on both the left and right of the community, together with his own refusal to allow any criticism of Robert Roberts Calvinistic doctrines to appear in the pages of the Birmingham publications, lest the B.A.S.F. should become a laughing stock, and Russell has ably highlighted the contradictions of both addresses in the Jan/Feb Circular Letter (the second address in the December Christadelphian Magazine is headed, “A Just God and A Saviour”),

Robert Roberts definition “a sentence which defiled” (Clause 5) implies that because Adam in his ‘very good’ state, sinned voluntarily, God planted a ‘bias to sin’ in him, which made him and us, ‘very bad.’ And so he was made to sin further, and was punished for breaking laws which God had made impossible to keep, i.e. “a ‘devil’ implanted in us prompts us to sin” according to Robert Roberts and Christadelphian supposition. The fact is that this evil doctrine of men makes God a monster of injustice and demeans the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to simple martyrdom, is a truth for which Pelagius and Bible believers throughout history have continuously contended and will do so until their Lord returns when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, for God knoweth those who are His (Numbers 16:5, 2 Timothy 2:19, John 10:14).

Brother Eric Cave.

The following article was first circulated amongst the Temperance Hall Fellowship of which the author was then a member and deals with the passages in Job which Christadelphians have misapplied:

Wrested Scripture Straightened Out

“What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Job 15:14.

We will first show to what end this passage has been wrested. In ‘Elpis Israel’, page 127, it is written:-

“Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean. It is therefore written “How can he be clean who is born of a woman?” “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “What is man that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous?”

This view of sin in the flesh is enlightening in the things concerning Jesus... Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there.”

Now we will examine the Book of Job and see if “sin-in-the-flesh” is there to be found or what exactly Job and his friends meant when they used the words “clean” and “unclean.”

It should be obvious at the outset that the saying of Eliphaz in Job 15:14 is a pair of parallels - that the second phrase expresses the same as the first - according to the practice of the Old Testament poetical writers: so that “man” means the same as “he which is born of a woman” and “should be unclean” means the same as “should be righteous.”

By following the ideas which run through the book of Job, we shall find that in understanding the word “clean” as meaning “righteous” we shall not err; but if, on the other hand, we understand by the word “clean” a freedom from that “sin-in-the-flesh (which according to Christadelphian literature exists in the physical flesh, and therefore existed in the flesh of Christ) we shall be putting into the mouths of the speakers an altogether foreign idea merely in order that we might take it out again. Such a method of “understanding” scripture is capable of inventing the wildest notions, and is altogether without excuse.

Please produce your Bible at this stage and after a reading through of the Book of Job, or an examination of it afresh, according to the need and discretion of the reader, let us notice here the thread of the discourse, as it bears upon the words “clean” and “unclean.”

First, then, the commencement of the story is in Job 1:1 - “Job... was perfect and upright.” God witnesses to this fact in 1:8 and after the first tribulation God again declares of Job that he “still holdeth fast his integrity” (2:3). After the second tribulation had come upon him, God again testifies that “in all this did not Job sin with his lips.”

Job is perplexed, and asks “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery?” (3:20). Eliphaz, the first speaker, answers him: “Who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?” (4:7,8) and he then proceeds to tell of a “spirit” that passed before his face in the visions of the night, and which said “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?” (4:17). But still Job asserts his integrity: “Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (6:24), and again: “my righteousness is in this matter” (6:29 margin).

Then Bildad speaks and says; “Doth God pervert Judgment?... If thou wert pure and upright... He would awake for thee... God will not cast away a perfect man” (8:3,6, 20). And Job returns answer: “I know... but how should man be just with God?” (9:2), and “Thou knowest that I am not wicked. (10:7).

Then Zophar refers Job to that statement of his (“Thou knowest that I am not wicked) and puts it in these words: “Thou hast said... I am clean in Thine eyes” (11:4). (Here we meet with that word “clean” and we can easily understand what Zophar means by it, because of the prior statement of Job to which he refers).

Next comes the answer of Job to Zophar in which he says: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? (14:4). Eliphaz replies with the words quoted at the head (15:14).

Bildad supplies another parallel in 25:4: “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean? that is born of a woman?” (Here it will be seen that just as “man” is equivalent to “he that is born of a woman” so, according to the speaker himself, “clean” is equivalent to “justified with God.”

Job answers this by “till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go” (27:5,6). Here let us pause to notice again that it is still “righteousness” that is meant by “cleanness” in this Book of Job, the perfect and upright man.

Finally the “three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes” (32:1), - he justified himself rather than God.” (32:2).

Then Elihu speaks, and he again uses that word “clean” - “thou hast spoken... saying, I am clean without, transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.” (33:9). This is the same as saying “Job

hath said I am righteous” - also by the same speaker. “I am clean” is again paralleled for us by “I am righteous” (34:5).

And here I conclude. For if anyone by this time fails to understand that by the use of the word “clean” God, Job, Elihu, Satan, Zophar, Bildad, and Eliphaz all understood “righteous,” and if he cannot see that nowhere throughout the Book is the “sin-in-the-flesh” doctrine once imagined, then I am sure that no words of mine will help him to understand the Scriptures-

In the mercy of God we have been freed from grave error, an error that we held tenaciously for years, amazed now that we should have so firmly held to a doctrine which is nowhere to be found in the Book of God. Therefore we now appeal to you to search the Scriptures for yourself-

A.H.Broughton.

On the 3rd March 2003 I wrote to Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury as follows:

Dear Dr. Williams,

It was with interest I read your reasons for not becoming a Roman Catholic in the report of your interview with Charles Moore, editor of The Daily Telegraph and Jonathan Petre published on 12th February 2003. You are reported as saying there were two reasons for this:

“One was that I couldn’t manage to believe in the infallibility of the Pope. I couldn’t really believe that was the Church I knew from studying the (Early Church) Fathers. The other was some reservations about the traditional Roman Catholic doctrine about grace.”

I agree the Roman Catholic Church has changed since it was founded by the Early Church Fathers of whom Augustine of Hippo was perhaps one of the most influential, but I am not at all happy with the position you take up defending him as a truly Christian preacher. While Augustine may well have been, as you say, someone from whom we may profit by his sermons on the Psalms, is it wise to consider his then newly formed doctrines such as that of Original Guilt, as valid Scripture to be believed and taught as from God?

The reason I question this matter is that prior to his conversion to Christianity at the age of 33, Augustine had embraced the teachings of Mani, a Persian who believed and taught, if I may put it simply, that all spirit is good and all matter is evil. On conversion to Christianity Augustine did not altogether forsake this earlier conviction in regard to matter being evil and spirit good but modified these ideas to formulate the doctrine of Original Guilt in which he considered that human flesh was evil from the time of Adam’s Fall, an idea founded more on Persian superstition than on the Genesis account, and not taught either by Jesus Christ or His Apostles. Would you agree then that it is dangerous to accept the teachings of any human being, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, as being infallible or even as authoritative?

This thought also applies to all Creeds for they are without exception thought up by men dependent on personal interpretations of the Scriptures and vary considerably from one Church to another. Is it any concern to God what we believe? Surely it must be so if He desires we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The point I am making is that if one cannot accept the infallibility of the Pope, where is the wisdom in accepting the infallibility and authority of Augustine?

You seem to accept the Scriptures as the infallible and inerrant word of God in its doctrines and moral teachings if not in all its historical accuracy but when asked if your “approach (to the Scriptures) is rather like the (Early) Fathers?” it is surely incongruent that you should reply “I hope so.” This rather suggests you

do not fully accept the Scriptures as authoritarian but prefer the doctrines introduced by the Early Church Fathers responsible for founding the Roman Catholic Church.

Turning now to War and Iraq; when asked

“So should all Christians go on the anti-war march in London this Saturday,” you replied,

“No. I think all good Christians should ask themselves why they are going or why they are not going, and have a Christian answer to give.”

But you fail to seize the opportunity of explaining what the Christian’s answer should be, leaving your flock in uncertainty, and later, when asked in connection with the perceived threat from Iraq, you said,

“Is it always the case that the Christian must strike the second blow?” part of your response was that

“It’s not about whether the Christian should be passive or reactive in these circumstances, but about what reaction least worsens the situation.”

Again there is a distinct uncertainty about your message. So when at the end of this section you say,

“I’m enough of an old-fashioned moralist to think that pragmatism does come in,”

I can’t help recalling the time when Jesus saw the multitudes as sheep having no shepherd.

So what makes a Christian? Is it not discipleship of Jesus Christ - one who follows Christ’s disciplines? What would Jesus have His disciples do in regard to war and Iraq? You say that which “least worsens the situation.” Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight... but my kingdom is not from hence.” Totally peaceable - “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them which curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you and to him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also...” Where then does pragmatism come in? Is it not excluded?

I was heartened by your advice on prayer and can appreciate the problem of the person who said “it is not the absence of God but the absence of me” for often I find my thoughts are like restless grass-hoppers, jumping all over the place. The most satisfactory way to keep my mind in prayer is to base my thoughts upon the Lord’s Prayer, step by step, and then adding what Jesus does not mention - thanksgiving - which should flow easily from a thankful heart.

You are uneasy with the Roman Catholic doctrine regarding Grace and there may be nothing new that I am able to say about the God of Grace as exemplified by His Son in giving Himself on our behalf. “By grace are ye saved.” The Christian is no longer under the law of sin and death but under the Law of Grace as taught by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. Grace is unique to the Christian religion - there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

In this connection may I be permitted to set out the Gospel of Grace very briefly as I see it?

1) In the beginning Adam was made a natural corruptible creature and put under a simple law as a test of his faithfulness. Disobedience to that law would incur the penalty of judicial death and Adam would return to the dust from which he was taken.

2) When Adam disobeyed he was brought under condemnation and if the sentence had been carried out there would have been no progeny for all would have perished with him. Instead, an animal was sacrificed to cover his sin and this sacrifice demanded the recognition of God’s justice in requiring judicial death as the punishment for sin and of His mercy and grace in making a way of escape.

3) All are born under this condemnation for the purpose of salvation of the faithful. In this way Adam is considered as the Federal Head of the human race all of whom are considered by God to be alienated from Him and in bondage to sin.

4) Jesus, by the miracle of His birth, was not alienated from His Father but received a new life direct from the source of all life - a life not under the condemnation which passed upon all whose lives were an extension of that first life given to Adam in Eden, although He was related to all of us through being born of Mary from whom He derived His physical body.

Jesus was thus in a position where He could lay down His life voluntarily in place of Adam's life, so paying the debt owed by Adam - we are bought with the precious blood of Jesus who gave His life a ransom for many.

This is a very brief outline but I am sure you will readily see that it answers to all the figures under which man's present condition is, by the grace of God, healed. The Fall in the beginning was alienation from God, not a fall from some superior nature. Adam lost his right to the life which God had given him, he owed a debt to the law which he could not pay without perishing. This debt is what Jesus voluntarily paid at Calvary, having the right to life Himself and restoring the right to life for the faithful so that they will no longer receive the wages of sin - perishing in death, but, in due time, receive life eternal. Jesus suffered the Cross for the joy set before Him in bringing many sons to glory. We receive such Grace with thankfulness and praise.

Your sincerely,

Russell Gregory

* * *

In reply I received the following letter dated 11th March 2003:

Dear Mr Gregory,

Thank you for your letter; please forgive a brief reply, but the postbag is fairly full just at the moment.

I'm not quite sure why you appear to think that I believe Augustine infallible! But he has always been for me one of the most outstanding interpreters of Scripture and one of the greatest of all Christian philosophers. Of course he is, I think, mistaken about some things; I shouldn't dream of treating him as infallible. I have very little difficulty with the summary you give of the Christian doctrine of grace - though some of this is also a personal interpretation of what the Bible says, and there are points where I'd simply point to other texts that would qualify one or two of your claims.

As to the threat of war, I have regularly given my view in the public forum about the morality of war with Iraq. I have written several articles, an open letter along with the Cardinal and some broadcasts, and the bishops of the Church of England have made a unanimous statement. But I will not use my Office to commend particular forms of protest; and I know that very thoughtful Christians have come to different conclusions about this question after prayer. Also journalists doing interviews will naturally be determined to find some political message that could be headlined, and I was determined to keep to the priorities of talking about faith, since I have had plenty of chances to speak on other matters. Unless all Christians ought always to be pacifists, which is a much argued point, some element of pragmatism comes into our decisions. It is what theologians have called the virtue of prudence.

Yours in Christ, Rowan C.

* * *

Final comment: I was pleased to receive a reply from Dr Rowan Williams in person and can understand him not wishing to add to what was said and so avoid any ongoing correspondence.

There was one point he made which brought back memories of some concerns I used to have and over which I puzzled for years, when he said:

“...and I know that very thoughtful Christians have come to different conclusions about this question after prayer.”

I well remember being greatly concerned when, as a Christadelphian, I heard arguments, sometimes unpleasant arguments, about various doctrines, and wondered how, if there was so much disagreement, could we say we had the truth? Surely, I thought, prayer must play a big role in the lives of these Christadelphians before they reached their conclusions, yet “after prayer” they had “come to different conclusions.” Quite frequently, contradictory conclusions. How could this be? I could not accept, as Rowan Williams seems to take for granted, that God would give different answers to different people. God is not divided and truth is truth. There cannot be one truth for one person and a different truth for another, yet that is what I seemed to see around me in the various divisions of Christadelphia.

The answer I believe lies in the fact that God, whose knowledge, understanding and wisdom is without measure, and who, in His great love for us, has asked that we seek for knowledge, understanding and wisdom in order that we may serve Him as we ought, and has asked that we should reason with Him, demands more of us than we wish to give, but it is for our own good. We must take to heart the lessons Jesus taught in Luke 11:1-13: “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” The story of the importunate man tells us how urgent and persistently demanding we ought to be. We will not find the knowledge we need if our seeking is not unremitting. We will not reach much understanding until we have proved all things and even then should we find a weakness in our reasoning we must start again. “Prove all things and hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We will not receive wisdom from God unless He sees our eager craving for it. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me.” And in all this we need the mind of Christ. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” and then we find that though “it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:9,10). To those who seek diligently, persistently, carefully and prayerfully the rewards are great and so is the unity.

Russell.

The following article was written by Dr S.G.Hayes and first published in November 1873 in “The Christadelphian Lamp.” Dr Hayes shows great insight into the Scriptures and we can sympathise with his response to the unknown writer’s article which had the backing of Robert Roberts.

THE “UNANSWERABLE” ANSWERED

FOREWORD

The adoption of the above title calls for a few words of explanation from the author of the following strictures on an article which appeared in the September number of a monthly periodical professedly “devoted to the exposition and defence of the faith preached by the Apostles,” and well known to most Christadelphians.

In calling the attention of his readers to the article in question, the Editor says, “It is an unanswerable demonstration of the fact that Jesus had to come under both the Adamic and Mosaic curses before He could, in God’s arrangements, bear them away.”

A careful perusal of the article did not result in the present writer endorsing the Editor’s opinion; on the contrary, he came to the conclusion that it was not by any means an “unanswerable” demonstration of the

alleged facts concerning Jesus, but a demonstration rather of reasoning from false premises. And such being the case, he concluded to take up his pen with the view of exposing the fallacies on which the conclusions are based. How far he has succeeded in his task of answering the “unanswerable” the readers of the Christadelphian Lamp must be left to Judge for themselves. He has arranged his remarks under two principle heads, putting the first in the form of a question, namely, -

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

The best reply that can be given to this question is contained in the Lord’s own words in answer to John, saying, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15). “That is” (as Parkhurst remarks in his Lexicon for explaining the words of the Greek Testament), “to perform ail the works, and submit to all the ordinances, appointed by God.” Exact conformity to all the requirements of the Deity, according to the order of things under which He lived, was characteristic of Jesus throughout the whole of His career. It was His meat to do His heavenly Father’s will - His law was within His heart. He was obedient in all things, and always did those things that pleased God. And His submission to John’s baptism was an eminent example of His obedience at the very commencement of His public ministry. His earnest desire that the Scriptures should be fulfilled to the very letter is brought prominently into view on numerous occasions, and that it might not be broken He meekly submitted to every insult and every indignity. “He hid not his face from shame and spitting.”

John’s proclamation was addressed to the Jewish nation, and in response thereto we read (Matthew 3:5,6), “Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” As one of that nation, it was incumbent on Jesus likewise to render obedience by being immersed, not because He had any sins to confess, or anything of which to repent, for, being absolutely without sin, He needed no repentance, but for the reason already mentioned, namely, “to fulfil all righteousness.” On this passage Macknight on the Apostolic Epistles (vol. 1 essay 1.) remarks, “The son of God, in prosecution of the purpose for which He took on Him the human nature, came to John at Jordan and was baptized. To this rite He submitted, not as it was the baptism of repentance, for He was perfectly free from sin, but as it prefigured His dying and rising again from the dead, and because He was on that occasion to be declared God’s beloved Son by a voice from heaven, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him in the view of the multitudes who were assembled to John’s baptism.”

On Matthew 3:15, Adam Clarke observes, “To fulfil all righteousness.” That is, every righteous ordinance; so I think the words *πασαν δικαιοσυνην* should be translated, and so our common version renders a similar word (Luke 1:6). The following passage quoted from Justin Martyr will doubtless appear a strong vindication of this translation: “Christ was circumcised, and observed all the ordinances of the Law of Moses, not with a view to His own justification, but to fulfil the dispensation committed to him by the Lord, the God and Creator of all things.” - Wakefield.

But was this an ordinance? Undoubtedly it was the initiatory ordinance of the Baptist’s dispensation. Now as Christ had submitted to circumcision, which was the initiatory ordinance of the Mosaic dispensation, it was necessary that He should submit to this, which was instituted by no less an authority, and was the introduction to His own dispensation of eternal mercy and truth. But it was necessary on another account. Our Lord represented the High Priest, and was to be the High Priest over the house of God: now as the High Priest was initiated into His office by washing and anointing, so must Christ, and hence He was baptized, washed and anointed by the Holy Ghost. Thus He fulfilled the righteous ordinance of His initiation into the office of High Priest, and thus was prepared to make an atonement for the sins of mankind. “For so it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness,” i.e. to own every divine institution, and so to show my readiness to comply with all God’s righteous precepts, and to justify God and approve his counsel (Luke 7:29), and celebrate his wisdom in sending thee to prepare his and my way, by calling men to repentance, and by so doing to fit them for the blessings of my kingdom and the avoiding of the wrath to come. So the Apostolic Constitution (lib.7 ch. xxii.) say that Christ was baptized, “not that He needed any purgation, but to testify the truth of St. John’s baptism, and be an example to us.” - Whitby.

All righteousness. “There was no particular precept in the Old Testament requiring this, but He chose to give the sanction of His example to the baptism of John, as to a divine ordinance. The phrase “all righteousness” here is the same as a righteous institution or appointment. Jesus had no sin. But He was

about to enter on His great work. It was proper that He should be set apart by His forerunner and show His connection with him and give His approbation to what John had done. Also, He was baptized that occasion might be taken, at the commencement of His work, for God publicly to declare His approbation of Him and His solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah” - Barnes.

All the above authorities are agreed on this question of baptism. Further, it may be remarked that it was by this act of obedience that Jesus was made manifest to Israel. He then “came by water.” (1 John 5:6). And then it was that the Spirit of God descended upon Him and a voice from heaven was heard saying, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” It was thus made the occasion of His anointing or Christing, and moreover, by that same act of obedience He left an example that all believers in Him should follow in His steps and be baptized into His name.

“I knew him not” (says John), “but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode on him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the son of God.” (John 1:31-34).

In the article before alluded to in “The Christadelphian,” the writer, while admitting that it was necessary for Jesus to undergo this rite (of baptism), and that otherwise He would not have fulfilled all righteousness, or in other words would have sinned, contends that, inasmuch as the baptism of John had relation to sin, and as a consequence to death also, which is the wages of sin; that there must have been some reason for (Jesus) having to undergo a ceremony which had relation to sin and death. He then asks, “What could that (reason) be but the sentence of death inherited from Adam?” He then goes on to say that the Jews generally in submitting to the baptism of John practically confessed that they were worthy of death on account of their iniquities; and that Jesus in going through the same ceremony thereby acknowledged that He was under sentence of death on account of the sin of the first man. Unable himself to see any other reason why Jesus submitted to the ceremony than the one he suggests, he rather hastily comes to the conclusion that none other can be given! The fallacy of this is apparent. Surely it is possible there may be another even more satisfactory reason which has escaped the notice of the writer above referred to!

Undoubtedly there was a reason, and a very cogent one, too, why Jesus submitted to be immersed by John, and what that reason was has been shown from the Lord’s own words, in answer to the Baptist who at first forbade him. Those words of His do not contain the slightest hint that He believed himself to be under sentence of death on account of Adam’s sin. Neither is there a tittle of evidence to prove that such an idea existed in the mind of John. On the contrary, the Baptist is surprised that the Lord should come to him for such a purpose. “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Matthew 3:14). Throughout this article the writer takes not the slightest notice of that most important fact, that Jesus was begotten by the Almighty, and consequently, not being in the loins of Adam when he transgressed, was not under sentence of death on account of the sin of the first man. This consideration is fatal to his argument and shows it to be based on a fallacy and an assumption.

Would it not have been more logical on the part of the writer in The Christadelphian if he had first brought forward some proof that Jesus was under sentence of death on account of the sin of the first man, instead of trying to establish the point at issue by simply drawing an inference? But there was evidently no proof at hand, so he first enquires what the reason could be that Jesus was baptized but the one he suggests and then assumes, that Jesus acknowledged it by submitting to the ceremony!

The facts of the case admit of a very different explanation, as already shown. It by no means follows because the Jews generally in submitting to the Baptism of John practically confessed that they were worthy of death on account of their iniquities, that Jesus, in going through the same ceremony, thereby acknowledged that He was under a like condemnation. At best it is but an inference and on the face of it looks very like an attempt to find support for a preconceived theory, and unless some evidence of a positive kind can be found to prove that Jesus was under condemnation to death in Adam, the entire argument based on His baptism falls to the ground as untenable.

The argument in opposition to the condemnation theory may be thus summarized. Jesus was baptized:

- 1st. To fulfil all righteousness
- 2nd. To be made manifest to Israel.
- 3rd. To prefigure His death and resurrection.
- 4th. To leave an example that we should follow in His steps.

The circumcision of Jesus admits of a similar explanation. It was a sign or token of the Covenant which God made with Abraham, by which every man child was commanded to be circumcised on the eighth day. And the neglect of this peculiar rite was held by the law to be a breach of the covenant, which would result in the cutting off of that soul from Israel. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee: every man child among you shall be circumcised. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations. And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he that broken my covenant." (Genesis 17:10,12, 14).

In this particular Jesus was precisely in the same position as any other male child in Israel. The rigid observance of this legal ceremony was a necessity, and in harmony with this we find it recorded in Luke 2:21,27 that "the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law." Again, like the Baptism to which Jesus submitted, the ceremony was typical of a future cutting off and blood shedding, as well as a sign of circumcision of the heart. Paul's teaching is that all circumcised persons were debtors to do the whole law (Galatians 5:3), and that the law cursed them if they failed even in one point. Jesus discharged this debt to the full, and though cursed by the law because He was hanged on a tree, He was not cursed by that law as a transgressor, for He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8).

The writer in The Christadelphian already referred to, states P.428 of that magazine, that circumcision was typical of the taking away of sin, and a mode of justification which could not be for individual sin, seeing that it was performed when children were only eight days old; it must, therefore, have been on account of the condemnation inherited from Adam." This is precisely similar to the remark he makes when speaking of John's Baptism, so that, according to his argument, the sinless Jesus required to be justified twice over from the sentence of death he supposes He inherited on account of Adam's sin. And thus in both instances he assumes the point to be proved! It may be further remarked that even a criminal in being executed does not commit a breach of the law, but fulfils the law. But Jesus was not a criminal. The curse of the law was borne by Him to redeem those who had broken it. In a word, He died "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

And this introduces to the reader the second head of remark namely

THE CURSE OF THE LAW

"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians 3:13). "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." (Romans 3:19).

That the Jews were under this law and failed to keep its requirements, and consequently came under the curse pronounced upon all such will not be disputed. They were disobedient to the commands of Moses, and disobedience being synonymous with sin, and death being the wages of sin, it follows that the threatened curse involved them all in death. From this curse Paul declares Christ redeemed them, being "made a curse" for them. Here, however, it becomes necessary to discriminate between the curse pronounced upon the disobedient Jews, who were all transgressors of the law, and the curse borne by Christ, who kept the law. Inasmuch as Christ was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," it is impossible that the law could condemn Him to death as a transgressor. To suppose that the curse in both instances signified death as the result of disobedience is not only to condemn the guiltless, but to lose sight of all distinction between obedience and disobedience and to involve both righteous and wicked in one common destiny. How then did Jesus come under the curse of the law? The answer is, by hanging on a tree. "He that is hanged is accursed of God." (Deuteronomy 21:23). By the particular mode of His death Jesus became an accursed one. But this was no act of transgression on His part. To say that he thereby broke or infringed the law is to

contradict the Scripture and to affirm, in direct opposition to the Apostle Paul, that Jesus was not obedient unto death. There is no enactment in the law which says: thou shall not hang on a tree. The violation of the law consists not in hanging a man on a tree, but in allowing the body to remain all night upon the tree, and not burying it the same day. The passage in the Book of Deuteronomy reads thus: "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shall in any wise bury him that day." It is recorded of Joshua, in the book which bears his name, that, The King of Ai be hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day. (Joshua 8:29). And afterwards Joshua smote them (the five kings), and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening; and it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave, wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day." (Joshua 10:26,27). Did Joshua infringe the law in hanging these kings upon trees? Surely not. On the contrary, he acted in strict conformity to the law, giving commandment that the bodies should be taken down and buried at sunset. The fact that Joshua so disposed of criminals is proof that there was nothing unlawful in hanging a man on a tree. It was a most ignominious mode of death, and those so punished were said to be "accursed of God." Again, the words used in Deuteronomy clearly imply that such a mode of punishment might be adopted, and, therefore, could not possibly constitute a breach of the law.

In the article in "The Christadelphian" on the "Mosaic Curse" it is stated, p.419, second paragraph: "Up to the time immediately preceding his (that is Jesus) being hanged on the cross, he had "continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This implies that beyond that point of time He did not so continue. In other words He then became a transgressor! This is indeed admitted by the same writer in his book entitled "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified," p.67, first paragraph. His words (some of which we have italicised) are these - speaking of Jesus, he says: "Being a Jew by birth, he was 'made under the law' (Galatians 4:4) and therefore it was necessary that he should comply with the injunctions of that law. This he did in every particular except one. Consequently he came under the curse of that law! for 'whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all,' (James 2:10) and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians 3:10). Among the things "written in the book of the law," it is said, "he that is hanged is accursed of God." (Deuteronomy 21:23). This was the one item of the law which was infringed by Jesus, and therefore, he became obnoxious to its curse, which was death. But it was necessary that such should be the case, in order to obey the will of God, that he might effect that which is expressed by the Apostle Paul, when he says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'" (Galatians 3:13). Now here is a mixture of truth and error in which the author not only contradicts himself, but what is far worse, contradicts the Scriptures also! It is difficult to understand how Jesus could obey the will of God by infringing His law! But to return to the article in The Christadelphian, on page 423, second paragraph, the same writer says, "We have seen how Jesus was brought under the Mosaic Curse - namely, by a passive act commanded by God, and brought about in such a way that he was innocent of actual transgression. Here is contradiction again! This conclusion being the very opposite of the one before arrived at by the same writer, where he says: "This was the one item of the law which was infringed by Jesus, and therefore, he became obnoxious to its curse." But what is the meaning of a passive act? It is a contradiction in terms! The author might just as well have said that Jesus in hanging on the cross was obediently disobedient, or disobediently obedient! To be passively active must be a curious condition indeed. What confusion must have existed in the mind of the writer when he penned such a phrase as this. It is "confusion worse confounded." The Jews were redeemed by the same means that the Gentiles were redeemed, namely, by the shedding of the precious blood of the Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Revelation 5:9).

Great stress has been laid upon the words "made a curse," as if the bare fact that Jesus was pronounced accursed in the mode of His death was the procuring cause of man's redemption!

In the letter to the Galatians where those words occur, the Apostle was not writing specially about crucifixion; his main object was to combat the notion which was current among the disciples in that ecclesia that the converts from among the Gentiles must needs be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, as well as

believe the gospel and be immersed. Paul argues at considerable length in order to disabuse their minds of such false teaching, bringing his arguments to a climax in the 5th chapter, in which he exhorts the disciples (5:1-4): “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” The law having answered the purpose for which it was instituted, was taken out of the way and was no longer to be observed, being nailed to the tree when Christ was “made a curse.” as it is written, “And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13,14). “For he (Christ) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man. so making peace: and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” (Ephesians 2:14-17). The death which Jesus suffered was just as needful for Gentiles as for Jews, and equally redeemed both classes from the sentence of death in which all are included. Not that it was imperative for Jesus to die for the Gentiles by crucifixion, but had He not so died He could not have redeemed the Jews, and if He had not redeemed the Jews it would have been impossible for “the blessing of Abraham to come on the Gentiles” through Him. It was necessary that Jesus should submit to this particular kind of death in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. His own words indeed prove this: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” (John 3:14 Numbers 21:8,9). “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” (John 12:32,33). “Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him and Judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death; that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spake signifying what death he should die.” (John 18:31,32). Luke also writes, “Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” (Luke 24:24-27,44). Again it is written in the Psalms, “For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.” (Psalm 22:16). “And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” (Zechariah 12:10). To what do the predictions above quoted apply if not to crucifixion? And how could they have been fulfilled if Christ had not died upon the tree? It follows from the above argument, based on Scripture testimony, that Jesus was in no sense a transgressor of the law of Moses; that He did not infringe it in any one single point, and therefore that His life was not forfeited to the Mosaic law. And if His life was not forfeited to the Law of Moses in order to redeem the Jews, why should it be considered necessary that His life should be forfeited to the law of Eden in order to redeem the Gentiles?

In conclusion of this article it may be further remarked in reference to the matter of hanging on a tree, that it applied to the dead as well as to the living. This is clear from the passage already quoted from the Book of Joshua. He smote them and slew them and hanged them on five trees. Is it not plain from this testimony that the kings mentioned were dead before they were hanged on the trees? And would it not be a monstrous absurdity to curse a dead man with death? Moreover, in this case of a living man who was a criminal accounted worthy of death, he was already under sentence to die before he was hanged on the tree and legally speaking therefore already a dead man. To show this is to demonstrate the utter fallacy of the argument based on the idea that the curse In the case of the Jews and in the case of Christ Himself was the same, namely, death.

Finally, the Mosaic Law did not curse a man simply because he hung on a tree, but because of the crime he committed before he was placed there. But being found there after sentence, whether guilty or innocent, whether alive or dead, such an one was accounted cursed by the law.

Dr. S.G.Hayes
November 1873