

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 207

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Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings.

A writer in the 2nd century named Onesiphoros described St Paul as “a man rather small in size, bald-headed, bow legged, with meeting eyebrows, a large, red and somewhat hooked nose.” We have no way of knowing at this distance in time how accurate a description this is of the beloved apostle to the Gentiles. Yet evidently the power of the man was unmistakable as the account runs on, ‘strongly-built, he was full of grace, for at times he looked like a man, at times like an angel.’

Paul was of Roman citizenship, of Greek culture, and of Jewish faith but above all Paul was a Jew. To the end of his life he retained a deep and abiding love for his “brethren, my kinsmen by race.” He was originally called Saul, and like his namesake King Saul he was of the tribe of Benjamin. In about AD 28 and probably at just over eighteen years of age Paul went to Jerusalem to study theology under Gamaliel. Paul was clearly a keen student of the scriptures for his letters include some two hundred scriptural quotations.

In his writings Paul hardly mentions the earthly life and teaching of Jesus, but he is fascinated by the significance of His death and resurrection and all that those two events mean for believers. It is Paul who makes clear the federal principle, justification by faith rather than by works, and salvation through the mercy of God in Jesus.

Some of Paul’s writings are difficult and contentious. We have particular reason to know this in our striving to put forward what we believe to be the true interpretations of passages in Romans and our defence of Paul’s teaching of the Atonement. Some people find Paul complicated and legalistic, similar allegations that are frequently levelled at those who come under the name of Nazarenes. This may or may not be true, personally I don’t think it is, but I would say that, because of my background and convictions. But to anyone who thinks that Paul was a cool, unemotional rhetorician it is well to remember how his conversion involved a total reversal in his thinking and the complete redirection of his whole life. It is not surprising that the love, mercy and grace of God towards all men forms the keystone of Paul’s teaching. If anyone had experienced the totally undeserved and unconditional mercy of God, it was Paul on the road to Damascus. This radical change in Paul suggests an individual with deep feelings and strong convictions but with no fear of outside opinion, just an overriding wish to be true to himself and get things right.

Paul understood people who needed to change radically how else can we explain his tender dealing with the runaway slave Onesimus, who had robbed and deserted his master Philemon. Paul’s letter to Philemon on Onesimus’ behalf is amazing in its tact and tenderness. Useless as Onesimus had been in the past to Philemon, he had become invaluable to Paul and had apparently matured considerably and with

Paul's influence had become a believer, and for these reasons Onesimus was prepared to return at the risk of his life, to his deserted master. Paul delicately poses his petition for Onesimus as a man might for his son. "Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart...." These are the words of a man of deep emotional feeling and an understanding borne of experience and therefore enabling him to know how to approach another human being with care and tact on behalf of a changed companion and helpmate. The words surely must have had the desired effect.

Be comforted, be comforted my people:
Thy salvation cometh quickly: why with grief art thou consumed
Because sorrow hath stricken thee? I will save thee, fear not:
For I am the Lord thy God,
The Holy one of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Love to all. Helen Brady.

Continuing our series in response to requests from readers for an outline of our beliefs we now consider the teaching of "sin in the flesh" with reference to Bible quotations used in support of this teaching.

Part 3

PROVING "SIN IN THE FLESH" UNTRUE.

We see three problems with the doctrine of "sin in the flesh." Firstly, if Adam's transgression was punished by a change in his physical nature which makes us inevitable sinners then God is responsible for all such inevitable sin. This calls into question God's intelligence and goodness; and where then, is the justice of God in punishing us for our sins? Secondly, if sinful flesh has been inflicted upon all mankind then Jesus too was defiled and if the crucifixion was to show what human flesh deserved and how God condemned sin in the flesh, then Christ's death was but a cruel martyrdom, and, thirdly, such views as these hide the true reason for Christ's loving sacrifice.

Regarding the subject of the Atonement, God said through the prophet Isaiah, "Come now, let us reason together." God has, for this very purpose, given us the intelligence and ability to reason with Him, so why then do we not prayerfully use our God-given faculties to find truly sensible and reasonable answers to the above matters?

Let us start with Romans 8:3: - *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."*

The two expressions, "sinful flesh" and "sin in the flesh" cannot be found anywhere else in Scripture yet a far-reaching doctrine has been built upon them which is believed by almost all sects and denominations since its introduction from pagan sources into Church teaching by St Augustine in the 3rd century A.D.

Agreed, a surface reading of this verse gives the impression that sin dwells in the flesh, making it sinful, to which other verses can be found to give further support to this belief; such verses as Romans 7:17 where Paul writes, "For I know that in me, (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing," and in the Old Testament, Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one;" Job 15:14, "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" and Job 25:4, "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" This thought can even be applied to Jesus Christ as we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For he (God) hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us who knew no sin."

We say with all confidence, however, that a consideration of the context of each of these verses together with other Scriptures will show without exception that they are misused and that “sinful flesh” is nowhere taught in the Bible.

Indeed, the expression “sinful flesh” in Romans 8:3 is known to be a bad translation because the Greek word *hamartia* translated “sinful” is not an adjective, but a noun which occurs nearly 200 times in the New Testament, yet here, and here only, it is wrongly translated as an adjective. If Paul meant to say “sinful” he would have used the adjective *hamartolos*, as in all other places where “sinful” occurs. Correctly translated as a noun we see that Paul was saying that Jesus came in the likeness of sin’s flesh, that is, flesh belonging to ‘sin;’ as a possession of ‘sin,’ which expression is in keeping with the whole purpose of this discourse, for earlier Paul spoke of those who served sin as their master in contrast to those who served God. Romans 6:16 - “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Sin’s flesh, then, refers to those people who walk after the lusts of the flesh – who ‘sin unto death’ - they are ‘Sin’s’ possession, so that all in Adam are sin’s servants and belong to sin as their Master.

Jesus never served sin but came as a servant of God though in the likeness of sin’s flesh. This is again confirmed where Paul is speaking of Jesus in Philippians 2:7: “but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” This should dispose the notion of sin being in the flesh or ‘sinful flesh’ in Romans 8:3 for this is not what Paul wrote but is the result of wrong translation.

Let us now briefly consider the phrase “and for sin.” In the margin we read the alternative, “as a sacrifice for sin.” Is this alternative valid? We believe it is and for this reason: In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for “offering” was frequently omitted as can be seen by reference to Strong’s Concordance. * **See footnote.** When talking of the offerings made under the Law of Moses, whether it was a sin offering, a burnt offering, a wave offering, or a meat offering etc., it was commonly expressed as “the sin,” or “the burnt,” or “the wave,” or “the meat,” and so on, leaving out any word for ‘offering’. However, the context requires the understanding that an offering was being referred to. About two hundred years B.C the Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament, was translated into the Greek language. This Septuagint Version was in common use by the time Jesus was born and it was used throughout the Greek speaking world during the early years of Christianity. The translators followed the same Hebrew idioms when writing in Greek and so when talking of the offerings under the Law of Moses, and the word “offering” was again often omitted yet still implied by the context. So when we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” we can see from the context of this chapter that Jesus was indeed made a sin-offering for us confirming Isaiah 53:10, “when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin”. The Corinthian readers would naturally understand and know that Jesus was made a sin offering for them that they may become the righteousness of God in Him. Likewise in Romans 8:3, “God sending His own son... for sin...” has a marginal note, “by a sacrifice for sin” which the translators had good reason to put in. The “Emphatic Diaglott” reads “God, having sent His own son... even [by an offering] for sin...”

Next we look at the phrase “sin in the flesh” and ask does sin dwell in our flesh?

We answer that it does not and cannot, for sin is abstract, never in this world is it a physical quality. Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:34 where sin comes from - “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” But it does not come from every man’s heart; for Jesus elsewhere says “A good man out of the treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.” And again in Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart.”

It is from the heart that sin comes; it is not in the literal flesh as taught by St Augustine and believed by most of Christendom. In fact the idea of the flesh being sinful owes its origin to Persian sources and that is how it came to the attention of St Augustine, but the teaching cannot be found in Scripture.

In what way did God condemn sin? He condemned sin by sending His own Son in flesh like ours so that He could be tempted in all points like us and by overcoming all temptation Jesus condemned sin as being avoidable and sinners without excuse. In other words, Jesus, when in the flesh proved obedience was

possible and thereby condemned all transgression of God's Law. We have the example of Noah, he condemned the world by his faith and obedience as we read in Hebrews 11:7 - "By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." And Noah was a type of Christ.

Let us go back to the first transgression. Adam was created in very good flesh and sinned when in that same very good flesh. Why ever would God wish to make that flesh full of sin? It was St Augustine's teaching that it was the sin in our flesh which made sinning inevitable. Did God really put it there? Why should Christians want to go back to two thousand year old superstitions? No! God did not change Adam's flesh and today our flesh is still the same very good flesh with which God created Adam in the beginning - very good for the purpose for which God made it; a body in which we can live and move and have our being. A body in which to house our characters under trial of temptations in order people to cultivate and develop characters well pleasing to our Creator.

And next we must look at Romans 7:18 where Paul says, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing." We must note two things about this saying of Paul's. 1) Paul was not talking about his literal physical flesh, and 2) Paul was not talking of his present position as a follower of Christ. Both of these facts become clear when we observe that a few verses earlier Paul is talking of the time "when we were in the flesh," referring to the position of himself and his readers before they were in Christ. This one phrase proves both 1) - Paul could not have been talking of his literal flesh as he and they were still in their literal flesh, so "flesh" here must have been used metaphorically, and, 2) - it also disposes of the idea that he was talking in the present tense.

The confusion over tenses arises because the Greek language does not recognise the same tenses as we are used to in our English language but context indicates whether past or present tense is meant. In this case we see from the 1st verse of chapter 8, "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," that what Paul had said previously must have been in the past, i.e. all of chapter 7. Therefore Paul was not saying that in his literal flesh dwells no good thing, but that while he walked after the lusts of the flesh he found no good thing. Yes, he tried to seek good things but they were not profitable to him as he found out when on the Road to Damascus. Jesus knew he had a zeal for God but it was not then according to righteousness. But that was in the past. Now he was walking in the Spirit.

Turning again to Genesis and the "Fall" we find that Adam was placed under law which required he should be given free will in order to obey or disobey; this did not require a higher nature than we now possess. Adam's "fall" was from grace not from a higher nature. However, adherents to the belief that our flesh is full of sin look to the fall of Adam in the garden and claim that when Adam transgressed, God then changed his flesh from very good to very bad. We see this taught in Clause 9 of the 39 articles of the Church of England reads as follows: -

Of Original or Birth-Sin. Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *phronema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptised, yet concupiscence and the lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

And Clause 5 of the Christadelphian Statement of Faith (The B.A.S.F.) says the same:-

"That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity."

The reference in the Church of England creed to Pelagius is interesting because it takes us back to the introduction of the doctrine of Original Sin into the Roman Church by St. Augustine. Pelagius, who opposed St. Augustine, recognised that it was not Scripture teaching but a teaching based on an idea widespread in pagan beliefs, beliefs we know dated back at least to the Persian Empire.

To support the Christadelphian view it is usual to turn to Genesis 2:17, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” and say it is compressed into the third chapter of Genesis, verses 14-19. But it isn’t for nowhere in Genesis 3:14 to 19 is there contained the threat of death in the day of transgression, but there is instead set out the terms for a second probation, the first probation having ended in failure.

To conclude: no one has ever been able to show that there was a change in Adam’s flesh when he transgressed. There have been plenty of assertions made to this end but that is not the same as proof. The return to dust in verse 19 is natural death which, in Scripture, is never referred to as a punishment.

We could turn to other scriptures used in support of “fallen nature” showing how they are misused but rather than extend this article here we have enclosed our booklet “To The Law And To The Testimony” which deals extensively with this subject. There are also other articles in this Circular Letter covering these matters.

In our next Circular Letter we will look at the Resurrection, the Judgment and the second death.

Russell Gregory

*** Footnote.** Strong’s Concordance lists about 1,000 references where “offering” occurs in the KJV Old Testament. The Hebrew word ‘*minehah*’ is used about 150 times; ‘*qurban*’ about 60 times; ‘*trumah*’ about 40 times, besides these several other words are used and in total they amount to about 350 occurrences, yet in the remaining 650 cases there is no Hebrew word for “offering” in the original.

Comments and observations from Brother Phil Parry regarding the booklet sent with the last Circular Letter entitled:-

Correspondence between Dr. John Thomas and Lancelot Burrus

It was gratifying to receive with the Nazarene Circular Letter a booklet dealing with Dr. Thomas’s reply to correspondence from Lancelot Burrus, Orange Co. Virginia, and taken from “The Herald of The Kingdom and Age to Come.” July 1855 – Editor J. Thomas.

The first letter is from Lancelot Burrus dated 6th May 1855 as a result of his reading “Elpis Israel,” of which he was not in agreement with every part, which having read with Bible in hand, I can fully understand. Reading page 3 of the booklet I find Dr. Thomas confirming the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: “That was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural” - animal nature subject to decay and death, divinely styled “Very Good.”

The bottom paragraph of page 3 proves that natural decay and death could not have entered into the world by Adam’s sin and therefore shows Paul’s teaching in Romans 5 to be a legal sentence of death as a result of transgression of law and that “the Law of sin and death” is not a physical condition of man’s nature but a Legal Position from which one can be made free in the manner and teaching Paul uses in Roman chapters 5 to 8.

It is at the bottom of page 4 and top of page 5 that Dr. Thomas fails to recognise what the “sentence of death” for sin really meant. He says that prevention from eating of the Tree of Life would cause Adam’s nature to take its course and return eventually to the ground from whence he was created, thus fulfilling the

penalty for committed sin. However, if he had been mindful of what the Law of Moses taught about sin and that, in the words of Paul, “For the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ,” he would have learned that the sentence for sin under the law was inflicted death on the person or persons which were already subject by their nature to the death common to animals and humans. This was the case with Adam and Eve under moral law to their Creator – inflicted death in the day of eating against prohibition, in the Garden of Eden, not outside it.

Adam’s was a legal sentence not carried out, by reason of God’s provision of a Son He knew by foreknowledge would willingly suffer the penalty by the shedding of blood in Adam’s stead. Hence, as Paul said, “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us (Jews) to Christ.” The animal sacrifices pointing back to the typical lamb in Eden and the antitypical Lamb of God led to the slaughter of Calvary.

Apart from Dr Thomas’ oversight of what the penalty involved and which I have proved, page 5 is a correct statement of the case and a complete demolition of Clause V of the B.A.S.F. and also of the Drs booklet “Anastasis” in which he teaches corruptible resurrection and judgment for a worthiness of eternal life at the second coming of Christ.

From the top of page 6 as far as to his mention of the Kingdom of God he is correct and in opposition to the statement of Robert Roberts in “The Visible Hand of God” pp 19,20, where he states it required a miracle to change the nature of Adam and Eve to the level of the beasts that perish, a nature Dr. Thomas says they already possessed. See second paragraph, page 6, “There was no miracle wrought...”

I question the Drs. statement on page 6, middle of paragraph, “If they had continued to be obedient, death though lurking within them, would not have been allowed to enter into the world.” How could he say this when it had already entered the world in human and in the animal species?

St. Paul says, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,” not the death lurking within them by creation. The Dr. is incorrect when he says of natural death by creation, it became “the law of sin and death” in a physical condition. Paul was very much alive when in Romans 8:2, “for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death; he had passed from under a sentence of death to a sentence of life” as Jesus said in John 5:24, and confirmed by the Dr. in “Eureka,” proving that the death by sin, which passed upon Adam was a legal sentence of inflicted death. The Scripture teaching is that it passed upon all men not because of guilt but that by their being enlightened to their position they could by belief and faith extricate themselves in God’s appointed and merciful way.

Reverting to Dr. Thomas’s statement on page 6, “If they had continued obedient, death, though lurking within them, would not have been allowed to enter the world;” the point is that Adam’s nature was limited to 930 years and he died, therefore he could have been obedient for 930 years and God could have allowed him to die while others of obedience would live and die until God decided the earth was sufficiently populated and raised the dead incorruptible and changed the living to incorruptibility.

It can almost be said of those in Christ that Redemption has brought them into this position for as Paul says of them, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus...”

The bottom paragraph of page 6 is correct and confirms that Clause V of the B.A.S.F. is contrary to what Dr. Thomas believed at this date of 1855 when it has been stated by his followers he brought the Truth to light from the darkness prevailing at the time. We find at the top of page 7 his further opposition to Clause V and its doctrine of changed and condemned sinful-flesh. He says:

“So also our terrestrial system, though susceptible of deterioration, was “very good” after its kind. Adam and Eve were innocent and undefiled but without character. They became immoral and the practice of vice has made their descendants what we see.”

Edward Turney came to this same conclusion and is still misrepresented and accused of heresy as are the Nazarenes who believe as did Turney and Dr. Thomas, that Jesus came in the same physical flesh which Adam had at his creation and in which nature, by His complete obedience and perfect character, Jesus condemned Adam’s sin. Thus confirming the true statement of Dr. Thomas and the mission of Jesus in

justifying His heavenly Father, "Sin had to be condemned in the nature which transgressed." This was the "very good" nature of Adam's creation and was never changed by transgression as stated by both Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts in 1869 - that there was no evidence in Scripture of a physical change.

Edward Turney, in 1872-73 believed what Christadelphians are expected to believe now, but as a result of a closer study of a letter from David Handley to Robert Roberts he renounced the errors of that time, such as the doctrine of condemned physical flesh accepted by R. Roberts who had ignored the contents of Handley's letter, and began to express the same views held by Dr. Thomas in "The Herald of The Kingdom and Age To Come," at least on the subject of the nature and sacrifice of Christ.

Other subjects such as the Resurrection, came into the foreground as a result, and in the booklet, page 7, under the heading, "Resurrection Not Universal," we find Dr. Thomas more in agreement with Jesus, Paul and the Holy Scriptures. In fact I remember, when I wrote to a Christadelphian a few years ago, quoting from a written work of Dr. Thomas,

"I believed in the resurrection of the just at the second coming of Christ and the unjust a thousand years later, I taught this truth in "Elpis Israel."

My contention was, if it was taught as truth, why was it made a doctrine to be rejected and why did Dr. Thomas's misconception of the teaching of the Judgment force him to make the resurrection a process and rejection of 1 Corinthians 15:51,52?

Lancelot Burrus stated there were 800 sects in his day. Should we not then consider the words of Dr. Thomas on pages 9 and 10, and prove whether we also have not followed cunningly devised fables especially in believing the death of Christ to be an exhibition of what was due to His condemned flesh in which dwelt the devil which had to be destroyed (B.A.S.F.)? A friend of mine saw the film "The Passion of Christ" by Mel Gibson and said it was a correct depiction of what the record says of our Lord's suffering, and people who are taught or believe in 'condemned flesh' ought to see the film and realise it was a Sacrifice to pay a debt to the "Law of sin and death" - a life given, not a destruction of sinful condemned flesh, the flesh emerged from the tomb energised by Spirit instead of His blood which was shed by the scourging, the crown of thorns in addition to the cruel nails which pierced his hands and feet. Can any sane person believe the false teaching of "condemned flesh" demanded such an outrage on a sinless man? There have been people who did and do so now against all proof to the contrary laid before them even by Dr. Thomas!

A member of Christadelphia claiming to be of "the Household of Faith" branch, yet with the same doctrine of changed condemned and sinful-flesh which their pioneer Dr. Thomas has shown to be error and never took place when Adam sinned, in a letter to one of my brethren was trying to prove Jesus came in changed defiled flesh which Edward Turney discovered was a spirit of falsehood, yet believed Jesus came in the identical physical flesh of His brethren of Adamic descent yet was accused by Robert Roberts of teaching He did not.

Now this man from the Luton, Bedfordshire area is quoting from 1 John, "Try the Spirits whether they be of God, for many false prophets are gone out into the world," adding, "Of such was Edward Turney." Thus saying in effect that Dr. Thomas was also a false prophet when in his publication "The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come," Edward Turney supports him, and that Clause V of the B.A.S.F. is false and a myth.

Were the two malefactors, one on each side of Jesus condemned because they were of condemned sinful flesh? This man in Luton and also Clause V Christadelphians believe and imply this was the case so I will quote the words of the malefactor to his companion on the tree of Calvary, "Dost thou not fear God seeing we are in the same condemnation and we indeed justly, but this man (Jesus) hath done nothing amiss but we receive the due reward of our deeds." And he said to Jesus, Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom." Evidently he did not believe Jesus was receiving a due reward for being of human nature but because probably he read on the Cross the superscription written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, "This is the King of the Jews." His faith was so strong that in his terrible suffering he believed Jesus would be restored to life and retain his title, and reign over His Kingdom. Jesus commended him for his belief and

faith, "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." The thief must have heard and understood the preaching of Jesus and who He really was.

I am sure Jesus will not commend the man in Luton or any of the views and errors he has inherited from Christadelphianism which label Jesus under the "Law of sin and death" a legal position which would have rendered it impossible for Him to free St. Paul or Saul as he then was, let alone any other person under it. It is also implied that when Jesus said to the man "Let the dead bury their dead," that Jesus also was in the same category. In fact the Luton man has confirmed it in writing and so have members of the so-called Household of Faith some of whom I met in my own local town when I attended their lecture and was told that sin was in our flesh and in that of Jesus.

Jesus said, "My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven." Did God so love the world that He gave a defiled condemned Body as a sacrifice for us and call that true and symbolic bread the purchasing price for the life of the world? Edward Turney did not teach this, neither do the Nazarenes, but Robert Roberts did and so do his followers, eating and drinking damnation to themselves not discerning the Lord's body. "Except ye eat (in true symbol) the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." You have been warned enough times to touch not the unclean thing, the flesh of Jesus was as that of Adam when God created him a living soul. Dr. Thomas has proved it from the Scriptures and declared it plainly enough in the booklet we have considered. Why then the false teaching of Christadelphia, affirming that Jesus did not come in the flesh of the first Adam and accuse Edward Turney and consequently Dr. Thomas of saying and proving He did?

Paul, in 2 Timothy, gives a description of what is prevailing in these last days. In chapter 3 he speaks of those having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof (the man in Luton saying Christadelphians have not the power of the Holy Spirit and never did have it). False accusers are also in Paul's list for the self-examiner. Think then when at the table you call The Lord's memorial, "It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry." Proverbs 20:25.

Have those who accuse Turney of teaching Jesus did not come in flesh and blood identical with their own, read what he said in 1873? I think very few, but of those who know and understand and do not publicly witness to it, the time has come that they should stand up and be counted.

True believers are requested by St. Paul to stand fast in the liberty whereby Christ had made them free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Jesus did not reap where He had not sown when He uttered the words in Matthew 10:32-40 to His disciples. They apply even in our day. "He that hath the Son, hath life." Even previous to His death, which could not have been for Himself, or any cleansing of His flesh and blood. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

To Christadelphians and the man from Luton, Jesus would have handed out unclean flesh and blood to His disciples at the Passover.

Be honest then, and admit you are dead.

In all Sincerity in Christ's service, Phil Parry.

ROMANS 7

The 7th chapter of Romans is a very difficult chapter to explain and understand. The reasons are many. The expression of words do not make up for the Spirit of understanding. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... because they are not spiritually discerned" - 1 Corinthians 2:14. Much could be written of the foolishness of the doctrines of men from this chapter, believed by the majority of professing Christians of all denominations. Original Sin, the inability to live a Christian life, these are the root of the trouble, which blind the mental eye of understanding.

We believe this chapter can be understood in harmony with itself and the general teaching of the Word of God, so we make another attempt at its elucidation verse by verse.

We agree that upon a superficial reading, even by the people who profess Christianity, that what the Apostle Paul writes in this chapter is the experience of himself under their very own experience. A little reflection will prove that the wretchedness of Paul was before his conversion and not afterwards. We have no doubt that when we say that if any Christian thinks Paul is expressing his wretchedness as a Christian and that it is their experience, then they have not been born of the Spirit, therefore, they are none of Christ's. We all have experienced in some measure the wretchedness of Saul of Tarsus, but we should also experience the unspeakable joy of Paul the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

We know that Paul said in this chapter "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Also "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This cannot be truly said of the worst sinners. I have seen traits of character in the worst of drunkards and gamblers which I have admired above their fellow workmen who profess they are Christians.

I am not advocating goodness of character or justification by works apart from the free unmerited gift of God, but simply to show there is some goodness even in the worst of us. That Christians are tempted and fall short of the glory of God is proved from Scripture, but this is no excuse for self-consolation.

Let everyone ask themselves such questions as "Is there one record in the life of Paul after conversion that he either in word or deed did that which was contrary to the Spirit of Christ? Is there any one commandment that cannot be obeyed - have we proof that every one of them has been obeyed by one or the other of God's saints.

Many are the exhortations from the epistles of Paul to be followers of Jesus and himself. Again, how many of our learned men in every sphere of life, who criticize the Scriptures yet who have a high standard of morals and living?

We ask you to read chapter 6, leave out chapter 7 and follow on with chapter 8. There you have Paul as a Christian indeed;-

1) Freed from sin. 2) Raised in newness of life. 3) We must not continue in sin. 4) Ashamed of the things he did before conversion. 5) No condemnation. 6) The mind of the Spirit. 7) All things work together for good. 8) More than conquerors.

Now let us read chapter 7 as in brackets or parenthesis. Look at Paul talking of when he was Saul of Tarsus, giving his own experiences or that of a Jew or kinsman according to the flesh, unregenerate by the grace of God and trusting in the mere works of the Law. Just see if you can fit in such passages as these to Paul as a Christian. "I am carnal, sold under sin;" "O wretched man that I am." These two passages are key passages that unlock- the fundamental principle of the chapter and the necessity of being first redeemed. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Why this important factor?

Why the necessity of redemption through Christ Jesus?

The 5th chapter of Romans explains in glorious terms how Adam by one act of disobedience "many were made sinners; likewise we have how by the one act of Jesus "many were made righteous." The chapter should be studied in this light and in conjunction with others.

Let the Emphatic Diaglott help you. Paul had been taught by revelation that all were sold under the one sin of Adam (Romans 3:9,7,14,11,32 and Galatians 3:22), likewise that all are bought with the price of the precious blood of Jesus by that one act on Calvary.

Sold Under Sin

These are the words from the Emphatic Diaglott: “But I am fleshly, having been sold under sin.” (Romans 7:14).

Now the words “having been sold” is proof that he (Paul) was not “now” sold under sin, and that he was speaking of the time when he “was” sold under sin.

The sin is personified as a king reigning over those who are under his dominion. They are bondservants, or slaves, they are captives or prisoners. They can do nothing to release themselves from that wretched state of bondage. It needed One outside the prison to accomplish their release from sin.

Hence the vital necessity of the blood of Christ to Redeem or Ransom them from the power of the sin of the world (John 1:29). Jesus paid the price of their release. He set the captives free. This is the free gospel of the free unmerited grace of God, who purchased us with the blood of His own Lamb (Acts 20:24-28). This is God’s right wayness: “Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption and faith in His blood (Romans 8:24, 25). Thus we are counted, reckoned or imputed righteous without works (Romans 4-8).

We have access or being introduced into Christ by faith, yes when we were without strength, while sinners and enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son through His shed blood.

Paul had learned the lesson that “if One (Jesus) died for all, then were all dead” (1 Corinthians 5:14). Does this mean literal death? No, they were legally dead on the federal principle by the one act of Adam. Jesus said to the Jews “Ye have no life (zoe) in you.” They were literally alive but spiritually dead. Here is where Romans 5:15 proves that through the one offence, the many be dead. So through the one righteous act, sentence came on all men to justification of life (zoe). Romans 5:18.

Here are two classes of people but of the same flesh; one sold, dead, or in bondage to the sin, the other bought, alive, or freed from sin.

“O wretched man that I am”

Bible students know of the Egyptian bondage, how that the children of Israel were put under task masters, afflicted and made to serve with rigour. Their lives were made bitter and hard; beaten for no fault of their own. Words fail to give an adequate description of the miseries and torments through which they passed.

Paul does indeed in this 7th chapter give the wretched state of those under sin.

Dr. Adam Clarke gives the following comment on the 24th verse:

“To render this state more miserable is not only encompassed by the slaughter, but chained to a dead body, for there seems to be here an allusion to an ancient custom of certain tyrants, who bound a dead body to a living man, and obliged him to carry it about till the contagion from the putrid mass took away his life.”

This cry of Paul’s is ever worse than all human suffering. Sin will finally hold any for ever in corruption but of the redeemed there is hope even in death.

Surely the passage cannot apply to the sons of God. They, like Paul, rejoice with joy unspeakable in that they have been redeemed from so great a death.

So Paul could say, as we can, “Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord for this unspeakable gift,”

Now for the 7th chapter of Romans:

Verse 1. “Know ye not brethren (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth. 2. For the woman which hath a husband is

bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3. So then if, while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

These three verses are not difficult to understand, but are nevertheless very important in their application to a right understanding of the chapter.

Let us remember that the Gentiles were never under the Law of Moses. Law is the governing factor. It has power over those that are under it. By the figure of marriage, a man and wife are bound to each other while they live. If one died, then the other could marry again.

Verse 4: “Wherefore my brethren ye also are become dead to the law (of Moses) by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth (Romans 10:4). Since the death of Christ, Jews and Gentiles who believe are under grace. They became dead to the law and are married or joined in Christ. They are made free from the law, and are at liberty under the law of grace to walk in newness of life and bring forth fruits of righteousness unto God.

Verse 5: “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”

Here is a very important and key passage which explains a difficulty which those who believe in original sin or sinful flesh cannot understand, “For when we were in the flesh.” The word “flesh” has an important bearing here, for it is used particularly for the Jews of verse 1 and Romans 9:3.

There is only one literal flesh of men (1 Corinthians 15:39), Jews and Gentiles. The word is used to denote relationship. Paul was of the same flesh as a Jew and as a Christian. We are not left even to our own reasoning here for Paul tells us in Romans 8:9, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.” The whole context of Romans shows that it is one of relationship, bound to the Law of Moses or bound to Christ.

They that are in the flesh (mind or relation) walk after the flesh. The mind of the flesh is death. Those in the flesh are not subjected to the law of God; they cannot please God. Do these passages apply to Paul when regenerated? They do not.

On the other hand we have “But in the Spirit.” We belong to Christ if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. We have been born again (John 3). We have been born of incorruptible seed - the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), born from above (James 3:17). Do not these passages apply to Paul when regenerated? They do.

Undoubtedly then this verse 5 did apply to Paul when unregenerated. He, like all others before regeneration, “brought forth fruit unto death.”

What is sin? Are desires and propensities sin? If so, then Adam had them before he sinned. No, sin is transgression of law (1 John 3:4).

Verse 6: “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead (to that law) wherein we (Jews) were held; that we should serve in newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Let us take the first half of this verse. Have the Gentiles been delivered from the Mosaic Law? Is not this another proof that Paul was speaking as a Jew? Cannot we see that the opening verses prove this very fact. They had died to the law. The law of ordinances was nailed to the Cross, therefore released. In Romans 6 we have a fine example of how believers died to the sin and associated themselves in the death and burial of Christ in baptism.

Paul says, "For I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God" (Galatians 2:19). Is this not a parallel to this verse 6? Did not Paul serve in newness of Spirit and not in oldness of the letter as he did when he persecuted the church of God in ignorance, but upholding the traditions of the Jews?

Much more could be said re works of the law and works of faith but it will make this consideration too long. Just a few: "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17); "He is a Jew which is one inwardly" (Romans 2:28); "Justified freely by grace" (Romans 3:24). Reward not of works, imputed righteousness (Romans 4:5). "Access by faith" (Romans 5:2). "Not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14).

Verse 7: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust (coveting) except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,"

This needs no explanation. Where there is no law there is no transgression. Only through law is sin possible.

Verse 8: "But (the) sin taking (or finding) occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence (coveting). For without the law sin was (or is) dead."

This is a continuation of verse 7. It is only when we are forbidden, we know what coveting is and means. It is only by law we know what is good for us and where we must draw the line. There are uses for every desire but abuses are condemned.

Verse 9: "For I was alive (apart) without the law once, but when the commandment came (the) sin (lived) revived and I died."

Is not this the experience of us all? Though laws exist naturally and morally, we just simply live without any responsibility and pay no attention to them. Could this apply to Paul as a Christian? He admitted he did things in ignorance (I Timothy 1:12-17).

The second part of the verse: the commandment came (singular) can mean the law, but THE sin, lived, or revived, shows that the singular is comprehended in that law. The first sin of Adam as contained in Romans 5 brought condemnation and death into the world. Paul tells us that what applied to Adam as an individual, also applies to the Jews nationally and to all Gentiles collectively. The law enters that the offence might abound (Romans 5:20). That all Jews and Gentiles are under the sin of the world, proves that though the law of Moses was a law of sin and death, to them under it it was not the law (Edenic) which passed upon all men.

Before the Law of Moses, under the Law of Moses and after the Law of Moses. The Christadelphians render this verse thus: "And I was formerly living apart from the law, but the commandment having come (THE) sin lived again and I died." Jesus said, "This is the commandment that LIGHT is come into the world (John 3:19). It is only when the eyes of our understanding are open that we are responsible. Though Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and more exceeding zealous (Galatians 1:14) he only saw the letter of the law and left out the weightier matters of the law, Judgment, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23).

It was only when the eyes of his heart were open that he could see that he was wretched, carnal and sold under THE sin. He realized that faith in the Gospel of the grace of God in the death of His beloved Son upon the Cross was the only thing that matters (Galatians 2:20 to end), (1 Corinthians 2:2). The law was only efficacious when faith was manifested in it. Just read, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid, we establish the law (Romans 3:31). See also Romans 9:23, Hebrews 4:2).

No one will ever see the truth however learned and zealous, who will not see God's righteousness through faith (Romans 10)

This should be clear that we are all under the legal condemnation of THE sin. Alienated from God. This light of knowledge shows how we are sold under sin and are poor, naked, wretched and blind

(Revelation 3:18); “And I died.” This is the duty of all. Romans 6 shows how we are to die to THE sin. “For he that is dead (or died) is freed (or justified) from THE sin (verse 7), “Knowing this that our old man (the body of Adamic relationship) is crucified with Christ, that the body of THE sin might be done away, destroyed or rendered powerless; that we might no longer be enslaved to the sin. Look at the following in this light. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them in Christ” (Romans 8:1). “Seeing that we have put off the old man, with his deeds and have put in the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him” (Colossians 3:9,10), “And shall not come into condemnation but is passed from, or out of, death (in Adam) into life (in Christ)” (John 5:24). This is how Paul and everyone else became dead and alive by enlightenment and obedience to the faith.

Verse 10: “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”

This seems strange but nevertheless true. It is fully explained in the verses to verse 14. but for the sake of dealing with it fully we will make a few comments on each verse and then a conclusive summary.

If the commandment (either single to Adam or in the many to the Jew) was not obeyed in the spirit of faith as God’s requirement, it would mean death to them and not life. There was death and life in the same law.

Verse 11: “For (The) sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived (or beguiled) me and it slew me.”

Paul, like all others, was deceived. The natural man only sees the letter and not the spirit. The newness of spirit of faith was the primary object of the law to bring them to Christ. See Romans 2:20. Galatians 3:24.

The natural man may be a good citizen but it will only profit him in the natural order. Without faith it is impossible to please God. There is no life (zoe) in it, so that the person remains legally dead or killed by remaining in that position.

Verse 12: “Wherefore the law (Edenic and Mosaic) is holy and the commandment Holy and just and good.”

The commandments were given by God, therefore Holy. They have the power either to give life or death. Life if obeyed in the spirit and death if not obeyed in the letter and spirit.

Verse 13: “Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But (The) sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that the sin by the commandments might become exceeding sinful.”

The law which was good was not the cause of death. It was the sin which the law made abound and the transgressions, sins, that brought forth death was the cause of being either legally dead or subject to the penalty of the Law. It is only through the federal law or moral laws that we know what sin is and what is required of us, and that we are sinners by law.

Verse 14: For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.”

The first part of this verse is the final statement which proves all we have said upon it; the remaining part of the verse we have dealt with previously.

Now Paul in Romans 6, in harmony with these verses, shows in what sense we are sinners. “His servants ye are whom ye obey,” - servants of sin or servants of righteousness. We cannot serve two masters. We will either serve, or belong to, one or the other. When we belong to sin, we have nothing to do with the righteousness of God. So when we belong to Christ we shall have nothing to do with sin. If we try to serve God and mammon we make God a liar and the truth is not in us. The laws through faith show whether we are sons of God or sons of the devil or sin. Is there any doubt as to which class the apostle Paul belonged to? In the following verses you will get this contrast:

Unregenerated: "I cannot do the things that I would."

Regenerated: "I can do all things through Christ."

Verse 15: "For that which I do I allow not (R.V: know not): for what I would, that I do not (R.V; practise): but what I hate, that I do."

The Jews right down through history have had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They drew near with their lips but their hearts were far from Him. They, like professing Christians of our day, delight to worship Him in their own way. They were, in fact, servants of sin. They were a people in whom there was no faith. Paul included himself here.

In the unregenerated state we do things in ignorance. Because we think wrongly we do the things we ought not to do (John 16:2, 1 Timothy 1:13). Therefore we have no power to resist. We do things against our better self. We hate ourselves and say, "What a fool I have been" and then do the same thing again. Can any say this of Paul after regeneration? Did not the spirit of Christ dwell in him (Romans 8:9)?

Verse 16: "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good."

The law condemns sin (v.7) but he consented that the law was good (see Deuteronomy 4). Mere laws and formalities have no spirit of life in them. Faith which works by love serves in newness of spirit (v.6) and fruits unto holiness. The unregenerated could not do this.

Verse 17: "Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." The fleshly man minds fleshly things (Romans 8). The spiritual man minds spiritual things. We simply follow the natural desires when the spirit is not dwelling in us. When we are servants of sin, sin has possession of us and is dwelling in us. The reverse is the same. When God or the Spirit of Christ, dwelleth in us, we have power to resist sin or the devil and he will flee from us. The actions (good or bad) will manifest themselves to whom we belong. Just think of these words and apply them "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). So the natural man worketh his natural desires when unregenerated.

Verse 18: "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."

We have commented somewhere on this, but we draw your attention to verse 5. The literal flesh is not meant in this verse, neither is it meant here. They that are in (doctrinally) the flesh cannot please God. If literal flesh is meant here then Jesus, Paul nor any other please God. We have Hebrews 11 to prove that plenty did please God.

Dr. Thomas says that Paul spoke here of himself as an unregenerated man. Islip Collyer also. We have referred to good men, we also ask you to read Acts 10. We have also showed good works apart from justification through faith in the blood of the Lamb cannot justify any. Therefore there is no goodness as accountable in any unregenerated person. It is only God is good in the absolute sense. When God's word dwells in us and we reproduce it (Philippians 2:13) faith is made perfect by works (James 2:22) or in other words "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." (1 John 3:7, Revelation 19:8).

Paul had learned by experience as all true Christians that there is no good accountable to God in the unregenerated man. We have all experienced the will to do good, but have not performed it. It is an impossibility while doctrinally in the flesh.

Verse 19. "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

This is somewhat a repetition of the same thing. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). If we fulfil the desires of the flesh we shall not inherit the Kingdom. If we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. If we sow to the flesh in opposition to the Spirit we shall reap the reward of corruption. Paul, when regenerated had crucified the flesh and was crucified unto the world. (Galatians 6:14, 5:24).

Verse 20: “Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

How many times have we heard unregenerated people say “I have tried to do this, or give up that but I cannot.” The will to know what is right or wrong and even desire can be seen in most people. Where a true loving faith is lacking through the grace of God there is no power.

Verse 21: “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”

We have shown and proved that many natural persons can and do some good. Just look at Christianity, so called, and place it alongside the religion of Christ’s day. They profess belief in God and yet can make guns and make war. Paul was such an one.

Now look at a conscientious objector. It is easier to run with the stream - look how foolish you are and what people will think of you. Love your enemies? No, that is most foolish.

The answer is very different when you think of Jesus. They hated him without a cause. A man that always did those things that pleased the Father, persecuted for righteousness sake. All these things are against the natural mind and while we maintain them we will not do the good God requires and the evil is ever present and seeming easy way out.

Verse 22: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

This verse is proof to some that Paul was speaking of himself as a regenerated person. To delight in God with the inward man could mean nothing else to them. What we have said of the Jew recorded of them delighted to approach God (Isaiah 58:2, Matthew 23:23). The facts before us of present day professing Christians only prove that the inward man can mean the mind of man and not necessarily the new man creation in Christ Jesus. Paul gives the lie to such religion (Philippians 3). They say and do not - proof that the spirit of Christ is not in them. Study this chapter and see how Paul counted all things as dung for the righteousness which is of God in Christ Jesus. This is the only thing that will work in us to will and to do His good pleasure.

Verse 23: “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.”

Here Paul, as in Romans 8, shows the mind, natural or spiritual, is the inward man. “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he” - this statement that he was in captivity of the law of sin (v.5) sin had dominion over him. Paul did not contradict himself (Romans 6:16). Peter confirms this when he said “For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage” (2 Peter 2:19). If Paul was in captivity or bondage he was doomed and not free as he said so many times in Romans and other places.

Verse 24: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?”

We ask you to re-read section under heading of as first paragraph. The answer is no other than through Christ Jesus. Keep in mind Paul’s allusion of a dead body chained to a person. The body of death is outside of our bodies. So we can see it is the Adamic body of many members under which all are concluded. Natural death is not the end of the sons of God, but to die in Adam is condemnation as a responsible person will meet with the wages of sin even a second death, or if we die in ignorance we remain in the grave.

Dr. Adam Clarke quotes a verse by Pitt:-

What tongue can such barbarities record
Or count the slaughter of the ruthless sword?
Twas not enough the good the guiltless bled
Still worse he bound the living to the dead.
These, limb by limb and face to face he joined
Oh, monstrous crime of unexampled kind.

Verse 25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Jesus Christ is the only hope of a perishing world. If we gain the whole world and lose the (*zoe*) life Jesus offers, it would have been better never to have been born. The glory, joy, and full meaning of love (the half has not been told) of God's eternal Excellency when there shall be no more death, pain or sorrow, but peace and righteousness shall be the stability of the times. This has been made possible to all through the loving sacrifice of Jesus who died upon the Cross that we might share in that Kingdom. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through out Lord Jesus Christ. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." – 1 Corinthians 15:57.

F.J.Pearce.

On the subject of Fellowship

We have received the following letter from Brother John Stevenson after he received a "Statement of Beliefs" written by Brother Allon Maxwell:

Dear Brethren & Sisters of the Nazarene Fellowship,

A crisis in my relationship was precipitated by part of Bro. Allon Maxwell's thesis "I Believe." Firstly, I agree with him that "Salvation requires far more than intellectual assent to the things listed above." Amen to that. But later he says "In the absence of any clear statement to the contrary, mainstream Christians are entitled to assume that those who seek their company, agree with their 'mainstream teaching'. They extend fellowship on the basis of that assumption, and most would NOT offer the same privileges if they did know about the differences. To deliberately allow them to remain in ignorance in order to be accepted by them, or be awarded a ministry amongst them, or to receive the benefits of things they offer, is a serious form of deception, which also denies Jesus before men."

This has long been a problem to me. But I refuse to sit at home and break bread and drink the cup alone, and think to myself "I am the only one in this city who has the truth". It is commonly assumed that, at the Last Supper, only the apostles were with Jesus, but as it was a Passover Meal, I think it more likely that numerous disciples, including women, were also present. Even then the apostles did not know all the "truth". Some still thought that Jesus was going to raise an army, defeat the Romans, and establish the Kingdom there and then. He was the Messiah! They could not understand why he was talking about death.

"And Jesus, looking on him, loved him". This was the man who was soon to walk away sorrowing, for he had great riches. Back about 1940 I attended a Saturday evening play, put on by the Lygon St. Church of Christ Youth Group. It was pure fiction, but its main theme was this same rich man, a few days later, throwing a big party to tell all his friends that he had a change of heart, and planned to sell all he had, give to the poor, and follow Jesus. That play really impressed me. Although it was fiction, we do not know whether it might have really happened or not. And how beautifully wonderful if it did!

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' but you don't do what I tell you?" Jesus spent a lot of time telling people how they should behave. I have pointed out more than once that in the only description Jesus gave of Judgement day, in the latter half of Matthew 25, there is absolutely nothing whatsoever about theological dogma. All He wanted to know is "How did you treat these, the least of my brethren?" Thinking about that, we all have some way to go.

I have never made any secret of what I believe. Last Sunday, after the breaking of bread service, I had a discussion with a senior elder of the congregation about the problem that Bro. Maxwell has raised. I told him that I believed that Jesus was a man, the only-begotten Son of God, born of a virgin. God's authorised Messiah and Saviour, who was executed and after three days was raised to life eternal, and that

He will return to set up the Kingdom on earth and raise the dead; but I did not believe in immortal souls going to heaven, which was Greek mythology, nor in the trinity doctrine which was invented in the third century and officially adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in the fourth century. This Church of Christ elder sympathized with my stance and said there was no problem at all with my participation in the Lord's Supper. He knew of the Greek influence on the early church and the doctrinal disputation. He assured me that the only requirements of the Church of Christ were two: belief that the Bible was the Word of God, and that Jesus was our Saviour. So I was greatly reassured by that. I am aware that many churches would not be so tolerant, especially in years gone by, particularly before television; but I never keep my beliefs secret, and would agree at once not to attend any church that didn't want me. And I have a question to put to you all; Why did God allow errors of mistranslation to occur in English bibles which perpetuate Roman Catholic fallacies, and have misled millions? When Jesus addressed crowds of thousands, He well knew that only a small handful properly understood what He was talking about.

When I attend the Lord's supper, as I take the bread I think of Jesus taking His last journey to Jerusalem alone, knowing that He was to die; His telling the disciples "Do this in remembrance of me"; His mock trial as He was sentenced to death for doing nothing wrong, and Pilate's ratification of the sentence he knew to be unjust, because he was afraid of being reported to Rome. As I take the wine I think of Jesus nailed to the tree in public like a common criminal, being mocked, and having a spear thrust through His heart. He endured all this for millions who did not deserve it, including me. There is no greater love; there is no closer friend. These thoughts are what the bread and wine are intended to remind us of. They are utterly valueless and fruitless unless you think about what they mean. Never mind where and when you join with worshippers to celebrate the Lord's Supper; just keep thinking of what a momentous event it is a remembrance of.

I have a little book entitled "Pew View", only 104 small pages, by Madge Prentice, an Anglican born in Victoria in 1911, and who wrote this book in her seventies. She married in her late twenties and with her husband spent a large part of her life as a missionary in Uganda. The book is brimming with love for Jesus and urging readers to walk in His walk; love and service for fellow humans, and telling everyone the Gospel news. She tells of growing up in the church, of how she came to be born again at age 18, of her experiences in the church and in Uganda. She had a quiet time every morning in which she prayed for herself that she might live blamelessly, for others that they might come to know Jesus and be born again, and to read a portion of the old and new testaments. At the end of her book she says "It is my desire and intention to 'live more nearly as I pray'. I am far from perfect - I fail and fall at times. I too have to repent, and learn some lesson from my failures and mistakes. We all do. So I offer no apology for this sharing of my life, with praise and thanks to God for His wonderful patience and mercy. I desire most earnestly that those who read this book will truly come to Christ, if they haven't already. He alone is the great interpreter of life. There are so many puzzles and perplexities, we simply can't unravel them all. Only Jesus has the keys of life and death. Finally, to those who are Christians I would say - Take the next step forward. Buy up the opportunities which you still have, don't just drift along," and she closes by quoting Paul about winning the prize. Would anyone of us dare to suggest that Jesus will turn His back on this extraordinary lady? She almost certainly never heard of Christadelphians or Nazarenes, and never had reason to query theologians about false doctrines. But she cared about and ministered to "the least of these My children".

Sometimes I feel very alone. I worry that some of you in the Nazarene Fellowship might strongly disagree with my tolerance of people who have settled for less than what we believe to be the truth, and that church people might think I am queer for rejecting catholic doctrines. But just look at who Jesus consorted with; he didn't have any barriers. It was His opponents who put barriers up. And we need to be like Jesus in having no barriers, because there will be no barriers between members of the Kingdom. That is worth waiting for.

Love to all in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Messiah Jesus.

From John.

We continue with extracts from

THE DEVIL AND HELL OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER FIVE

ARE DEVILS FALLEN ANGELS?

Is it possible that God would ask us to believe that one who is found worthy of becoming a holy angel, worthy of being clothed with immortality, one who has become “holy and without blemish” could turn and rebel against the Eternal Creator who had lifted him to glory and eternal life? If an angel could fall from such an exalted position, what assurance would you or I have that after spending our lives developing the character God desires and receiving God’s approval for our efforts, a like cataclysm might not overtake us? But no, such a thing is unthinkable; it is impossible; it is unscriptural. If one can rebel after being saved and given immortality, then the promise of Isaiah 45:17 is untrue:- “But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” It will be an everlasting salvation – no danger of falling.

Yet various groups of religious minded persons hold to the theory that devils were once bright angels around the throne of glory in the high courts of heaven. To support this position they frequently turn to Isaiah 14 for evidence. Verse 12 reads: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations?”

WHO IS LUCIFER?

Harper’s Bible Dictionary says of the name Lucifer as used in Isaiah 14:12: “Used to render the Hebrew “Shining one” applied to the King of Babylon, fallen from his high estate. In the 3rd century A.D. the saying of Jesus, “I beheld Satan as lightening fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18) was erroneously supposed to refer to Isaiah 14:12. Hence, Lucifer came to be regarded as the name of Satan before his fall,” Not until the third century was Lucifer regarded as Satan.

The context of Isaiah 14:12 makes very plain who this Lucifer was and from what heaven he fell. We are told in verse 4: “Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!” The narrative is a proverb, and it is directed against whom? Against the king of Babylon, and no one else.

The narrative continues in the following verses, still referring to the deposed and slain king of Babylon, until verse 12 where the taunt is flung (some commentators style it a taunt-song): “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations’.” Verses 13 & 14 continues: “Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high.”

When the king of Babylon said in his heart “I will ascend into heaven,” he was not necessarily speaking of the physical heaven. When he said, “I will exalt myself above the stars of God,” he was not speaking of the stars that shine in the firmament on a dark night. He was saying, “I will exalt myself above the other political leaders in my realm.” His one design that would concern the people of Judah the most of the time of which Isaiah prophesied could have been his determination to exalt himself above the “stars” or kings in their immediate realm, Jerusalem, their seat of government, to make them one of his settlements. That such was his design is shown in the following sentence: “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.” Jerusalem, as the seat of secular and religious authority, is indicated here. Jerusalem is similarly identified in Psalm 48:1,2: “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king.”

The term “heaven” is used elsewhere in the Scriptures of the political leadership: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken;” “hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:2,10).

The context of Isaiah 14 also clearly identifies the nature of Lucifer: he was a man. Notice verse 16: “They that see shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?”

To summarise: Lucifer was a man, the king of Babylon; and he fell from heaven, from his seat of authority and power, and became weak as one of the common people. Could anything be plainer than this, when we let the Almighty use His own qualifying terms?

WHO WAS THE CHERUB OF EZEKIEL 28?

Was the cherub of Ezekiel 28 the likeness of Lucifer, or in any way related to the devil?

Let us look closely at the context of the chapter. Verses 1 & 2 read: “The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God...” The word of the Lord was being directed to the “prince of Tyrus,” in its immediate significance. And for longer-range application, we find the meaning of the word “Tyrus” is, “an adversary, and enemy reserved for the day of judgment and vengeance.” The prince of Tyrus, in a spiritual sense, includes all those who prove unfaithful, those who become enemies of God, whom God will bring to judgment to “convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.” (Jude 15,16).

Ezekiel says further: “Thus saith the Lord God: Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God.”

Verse 12 contains more of the message: “Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering.” The persons represented here had been in Eden, the vineyard or garden of the Lord, where all of God’s servants labour during their day of salvation. As servants of God, they had been heir to God’s richest blessings, even life for evermore; but they did not choose to submit themselves to the rule of God.

“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy way from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” (Ezekiel 28:12-16). The position of these persons is the same as that of the Galatian brethren, to whom Paul wrote many years later: “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Galatians 5:7).

What will be the result of their disobedience? “Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee” (verse 18). “Fire,” representative of the judgments of God, shall “devour” them and “never shalt thou be any more.” (verse 19).

No, the cherub does not represent the devil as a monster or spirit or demon, or as a fallen angel, but only unfaithful servants of God who could have received God’s high honours and blessings for faithfulness, but who proved disloyal to their trust, thus making themselves subjects of God’s judgment.

WHAT ANGELS “KEPT NOT THEIR FORMER ESTATE”?

If devils are not angels fallen from heaven, who are the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 5,6) ?

Jude writes of a particular event in history. Let us begin reading at verse 5: “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” Notice particularly in this verse that Jude wishes us to recall something that occurred when the Lord saved his people out of Egypt- Jude is not calling our attention to something that happened up in heaven, but to what happened when He saved the people out of the land of Egypt.

Verse 6 continues: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

First let us ask: Who were these angels? What is the meaning of the word “Angel”? Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon defines the word “*angelos*” translated “angels” in Jude, as “messenger, envoy, generally one that announces or tells.” The term may refer either to mortal or immortal messengers.

What kind of messenger was Jude speaking about? They were messengers who were serving in the days when the Lord saved His people out of the land of Egypt.

When Israel first came to the borders of the Promised Land, about two years after their departure from Egypt, “the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.” (Numbers 13:2). Here were twelve men, rulers among them, men high in authority, chosen to be messengers sent into the land of Canaan. Moses sent them to spy out the land to bring an account of it.

After forty days the messengers returned from their search, bringing with them luscious grapes, pomegranates and figs. Ten of these messengers brought also an evil report of the land (Numbers 13:32), which caused a mass rebellion among the Israelites, turning them against Moses and Aaron, also against Caleb and Joshua, who refused to consent with the evil report. We read: “And the men which Moses sent to search out the land, who returned and made all the congregation murmur against him, by bringing up slander upon the land, even those men... died by the plague before the Lord.” (Numbers 14:36,37). This explains who were these messengers who fell from their high estate when God delivered His people from Egypt.

These men had high estate - each was a ruler in his tribe; but by their disobedience they fell, and they are “reserved unto the day of judgment.” Neither Jude nor any other Bible author, ever taught that angels, glorified, immortal beings can fall from the heaven where God dwells. But when we let the Bible interpret itself, all is plain.

JESUS BEHELD SATAN FALL

When the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent forth returned, having accomplished their mission, Jesus “said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightening fall from heaven.” (Luke 10:18). Who was the Satan that He was talking about?

Satan, as we have discussed already, may be used as the personification of evil and sin. Revelation assures us that Satan - sin and all sinners - is doomed for eventual destruction in the “lake of fire... which is the second death” (Revelation 20:9,10, 21:8).

When Jesus said He “beheld Satan as lightening fall from heaven” He spoke prophetically. The heaven this Satan now occupies is not God’s heaven, but the social and political heavens of our troubled cosmos. But Satan will fall from it, be cast out, when Christ and His co-rulers take the reins of government and suppress all evil. During the Millennial reign, sin and all sinners will be bound and at the close of the Millennium eliminated. Satan will fall from heaven. Sin shall lose its last dominion on earth.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT DEVILS DID JESUS CAST OUT?

On several occasions during Jesus' ministry He was said to cast out devils. An outstanding example of this was Jesus' healing the insane man. (Luke 8:26-34). The devils were said to have left the insane man and entered into a herd of swine.

Knowing that the word "devil" is used to refer to an opposer, as when Peter opposed Jesus (Matthew 16:23), we can understand that a devil might also refer to that which opposes a healthy condition of body or mind. In the Gospels, diseases are often called devils. The Greek word employed is "*daimonion*," meaning "demon."

The man referred to in Luke 8 was insane. This can be readily observed from the narrative, beginning at verse 26.

Verse 29 reveals that the man was insane: "for he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness." The word used here is "*daimon*," meaning "a deified spirit" (of a bad nature).

"And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep." (verses 30,31). Here was evidenced the confused thinking of an insane man; he thought of himself as a dual personality, "Legion."

In verses 32 & 33 the insane man, thinking himself to be many in one, and termed "devils," "they" and "them," implored Jesus that the disease might leave him and go into the swine. This Jesus did. He had the power to cure the insane man, also the ability to infect the swine with a mental disturbance that had afflicted the man, with the result that the swine ran into the lake and were drowned.

Verse 35 shows definitely that the man was insane. The text reads: "Then they (the people of the nearby village) went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." The man was now in his right mind. He had been insane, and Jesus had healed his insanity.

In Matthew 12:43-45 Jesus spoke a parable that may have been suggested by a case history of an insane man who had been healed. In this case the man who had seemed to be cured suffered a relapse, and his condition became worse than it had been before.

The narrative reads: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The lesson in this parable is the persistence of wickedness. It returns, and the soul not indwelt by the rightful tenant - righteousness - is always beleaguered. Rejection of evil is never enough; at best it is only a prelude to a new loyalty. Nature and human nature both abhor a vacuum: no faith is almost worse than a bad faith, for no faith invites a swarm of bad faiths; no life remains empty of worship. It doesn't help a man to know what he does not believe, unless he knows also what he does believe.

The Pharisees had cast out the gross sins, but they had left life empty of any loyalty beyond themselves. So seven other "devils" arrived, such as love of money, greed, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. In the form of a parable our Lord was foretelling the degeneration of the people who imagine that they have nothing to learn from Him, although He has more wisdom to impart than Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba.

To be continued...

We continue our extracts from “Adam, Eve and the Serpent” which have been selected and kindly sent to us by Brother John Stevenson:

Augustine diverges sharply from Chrysostom, when he traces how sin, transmitted from the primal parents through sexual reproduction, infected their offspring, so that now “everyone, arising as he does from a condemned stock, is from the first necessarily evil and carnal through Adam. So Cain, when another form of carnal desire, envy, overcame his rational judgment, murdered his brother, exemplifying the lust for power that now dominates and distorts the whole structure of human relationships.”

Those who share Augustine’s vision of the disastrous results of sin must, he believes, accept as well the rule of one man over others - master over slave, ruler over subjects - as the inescapable necessity of our universal fallen nature:

Such, as men are now, is the order of peace. Some are in subjection to others and, while humility helps those who serve, pride harms those in power. But as men once were, when their nature was as God created it, no man was a slave either to man or to sin. However, slavery is now penal in character, and planned by that law which commands the preservation of the natural order and forbids its disturbance.

Yet Augustine’s predecessors Justin and Irenaeus had affirmed the necessity of coercive government only for “those outside.” Both, like Chrysostom, clearly discriminate between the coercive government necessary for outsiders and the internal rule of the church. Baptized Christians, Justin and Irenaeus agree, essentially have recovered from the damage inflicted by sin. Baptism transforms converts from their former State as “children of necessity and ignorance... to become children of choice and knowledge,” washed clean of sin, illuminated, and, Justin says, “by our deeds, too, found to be good citizens and keepers of the commandments.”

Augustine agreed with his predecessors in delineating two distinct modes of relationship - one motivated by impulses of domination and submission, the other by mutually affirming love. But what sets Augustine’s mature position apart from that of his predecessors is his refusal simply to identify the first with the state and the second with the church. As he redefines them, the “city of man” and the “city of God” cut across both categories. Even baptized Christians are not exempt from either the war of conflicting impulses or the need for external government.

Augustine insists, on the contrary, that all government remains only a superstructure imposed upon the internal rebellion that sin has instigated within everyone, pagan and Christian alike. Consequently he believes the situation of the baptized Christian is far more complex than Chrysostom imagined. The Christian, like the unbeliever, has to contend against the enemy within that holds power over his will; hence he, too, needs the help of external discipline. So even in his domestic life, Augustine says, although the Christian longs for heaven, ‘where there will be no further need for giving orders to other human beings. . . meanwhile, in case anyone in the household breaks its peace by disobedience, he is disciplined by words or whipping or other kinds of punishment lawful and licit in human society, and for his own good, to readjust to the peace he has abandoned.’

If Christians cannot even be trusted to govern themselves, how are they to approach church government? Later in his life Augustine came to endorse, for the church as well as the state, the whole arsenal of secular government that Chrysostom had repudiated - commands, threats, coercion, penalties, and even physical force. Whereas Chrysostom had deemed his own role as that of advisor, not ruler, Augustine, like Ignatius of Antioch, sees the bishop as ruling “in God’s place.” One of Augustine’s favourite images for church leaders, as for their model, Christ, is that of the physician, ministering to those who have been baptized but, like himself, are still sick, each one infected with the same ineradicable disease contracted through original sin. Augustine tends, consequently, to discount the patients’ opinions. It is the physician’s responsibility not only to administer to sick and suffering humanity the life-giving medication of the sacraments, but also to carry out, when necessary, disciplinary procedures as a kind of surgery.

This vision of the church, advocated by others, such as Augustine’s close friend and fellow bishop Alypius, corresponds in a sense to Augustine’s own experience. In his “Confessions” he admits how

desperately lost, sick, and helpless he felt, believing his will to be morally paralyzed, as he awaited the revelation of grace mediated through the church to penetrate him from without and effect his healing. But other Christians surely would not have recognized their own experiences in his account. The British monk Pelagius, for one, sharply objected, criticizing Augustine's "Confessions" for popularizing a kind of pious self-indulgence. How, then, did Augustine's idiosyncratic views on the effects of original sin, - and hence on the politics of the church and state - come to be accepted in the fifth and sixth centuries, first by the leadership of the Catholic church and then by the majority of its members? The question is, of course, wildly ambitious; but let us attempt to sketch out the beginning of an answer.

Let us consider first how the conflicting views of Chrysostom and Augustine might sound to their contemporaries. By the beginning of the fifth century Catholic Christians lived as subjects of an empire they could no longer consider alien, much less wholly evil. Having repudiated the patronage of the traditional gods some two generations earlier, the emperors now sometimes used military force to help stamp out pagan worship. Furthermore, the two sons of Theodosius the Great, reigning since his death in 395 as emperors of East and West, continued their father's policy of withdrawing patronage from Arian Christians and placing themselves wholly in alliance with the Catholic bishops and clergy. An earlier generation of Christian bishops, including Eusebius of Caesarea, deeply impressed by the events they had witnessed and convinced that they lived at a turning point in history, had hailed Constantine and his successors as God's chosen rulers. Augustine, like most of his fellow Christians, once had shared that conviction. But after two generations the Christian empire and its rulers, if no longer alien, remained in many respects all too human. By the beginning of the fifth century few who dealt with the government firsthand—certainly not Chrysostom and finally not Augustine either—would have identified it with God's reign on earth.

The mature Augustine offers a theology of politics far more complex and compelling than any of its rivals. Chrysostom claimed that imperial rule is unnecessary for believers, but Augustine insists that God has placed everyone, whether pagan or priest, equally in subjection to external government. Yet Augustine's reasoning diverges sharply from the naive endorsement of Constantine's court theologian, Eusebius. Augustine's dark vision of a human nature ravaged by original sin and overrun by lust for power rules out uncritical adulation and qualifies his endorsement of imperial rule. That same dark vision impels him to reject Chrysostom's more optimistic premise that imperial power is necessary for pagans, but, in effect, superfluous in the lives of pious citizens. Augustine, on the contrary, places secular government at the centre of human society, indispensable for the best as well as the worst among its members. For a Christian, civic obligations rank second, certainly, to one's obligation to God (or, as this usually meant in practice, to the church). Yet apart from direct conflict of interest, even the bishop must render appropriate obedience to secular authority. Augustine acknowledges the emperor's rule, however limited (or even however brutal), to be, nevertheless, as permanent and ineradicable - in this world, at least - as the effects of original sin. More effectively than either Eusebius on the one hand or Chrysostom on the other, Augustine's theory enabled his contemporaries to come to terms both with the fact of Christian empire and with its intractably human nature.

For if the fifth-century state no longer looked so evil as it once had, the church, in turn, no longer looked so holy. Chrysostom, holding to his by now essentially sectarian theory, deplored what had happened to the church since imperial favour first shone upon Christians: first, the massive influx of nominal converts; and second, the way that a shower of imperial privileges had radically changed the dynamics - and raised the stakes - of ecclesiastical politics. But what Chrysostom could only denounce, Augustine could interpret. Challenging the traditional model of the church and the assumption on which it rested - free will - Augustine's theory of original sin could make theologically intelligible not only the state's imperfections but the church's imperfections as well.

Secondly, while changing the way Catholic Christians understood the psychological and religious meaning of freedom (*libertas*), Augustine's theory bore the potential for changing as well their understanding of, and relationship to, political liberty. Throughout the Roman republic men of wealth and power tended to agree that *libertas* meant living under the rule of a "good governor," that is, an emperor of whom the senate approved. We have seen, however, that certain Christians, among others, despised the patricians' version of liberty, regarding it as a euphemism for *slavery* - that is, for political subjugation induced by the totalitarian rule of the later Caesars. For some people, *liberty* meant freedom from superior authority and freedom from constraint - including, for example, freedom of speech. We have seen, too, how

Christians, so long as they remained a persecuted, illegal, and minority sect, sided with the latter position. We recall how Minucius Felix, writing c. 200 C.E., rhetorically described the Christian who, undergoing torture for his faith, maintains his *libertas*:

“How beautiful is the spectacle to God when a Christian does battle with pain, when he is brought up against threats, and punishment, and torture; when, mocking the noise of death, he treads underfoot the horror of the executioner; when he raises up his liberty against kings and princes, and yields to God alone ... when, triumphant and victorious, he tramples on the very one who has passed sentence upon him.”

Repudiating the charge that Christians were afraid for superstitious reasons to offer pagan sacrifice, Minucius Felix had declared that “it is not a confession of fear, but an assertion of our true liberty. Tertullian, Minucius’s contemporary, when he challenged imperial authority in the name of that “liberty which is [the individual’s] right,” had assumed that the term meant freedom from superior authority.

Augustine, on the contrary, having denied that human beings possess any capacity whatever for free will, accepts a definition of liberty far more agreeable to the powerful and influential men with whom he himself wholeheartedly identifies. As Augustine tells it, it is the *serpent* who tempts Adam with the seductive lure of liberty. The forbidden fruit symbolizes, he explains, “personal control over one’s own will.” Not, Augustine adds, “that it is evil in itself, but it is placed in the garden to teach him the primary virtue” - obedience. So, as we noted above, Augustine concludes that humanity never was really meant to be, in any sense, truly free. God allowed us to sin in order to prove to us from our own experience that “our true good is free slavery” - slavery to God in the first place and, in the second, to his agent, the emperor. Idiosyncratic as it sounds, Augustine’s paradox finds a parallel in the political rhetoric of his contemporaries. Claudian, pagan court poet and propagandist in the service of Stilicho and of Honorius, the Christian emperor of the West, challenges those who call the emperor’s rule slavery (*servitium*): “Never is liberty more appreciated than under a good king!” During the following centuries a similar view was incorporated into the imperial Catholic mass, which directs the priest to pray that, “the enemies of peace being overthrown, Roman liberty may serve Thee in security” (*secura tibi serviat Romana libertas*).

Finally, anyone observing the contrast between the careers of the two bishops might well conclude that Augustine’s version of the politics of Paradise proved effective in dealing with the politics of the fifth-century Roman Empire, whereas Chrysostom’s version failed. Both Augustine, born in Tagaste, North Africa, in 354, and John Chrysostom, born in Antioch either the same year or a few years earlier, grew up in a world ruled for more than a generation by Christian emperors - a succession interrupted only by Julian’s abrupt two-year reversion to imperial patronage of paganism. But Augustine’s responses to the new constellation of imperial power were very different from Chrysostom’s.

Augustine’s position as bishop of a provincial North African city can scarcely be compared with Chrysostom’s far more prominent position three years later in the capital city of the eastern empire. Still, in accepting the episcopate, Augustine, too, became a public figure and ruler of a community. When his authority was challenged by the rival church of Donatists, Augustine came to appreciate - and manipulate - the advantages of his alliance with the repressive power of the state. His opponents were Christians who had refused to acknowledge the episcopacy of Caecilian, elected bishop of Carthage in 311, on the grounds that Caecilian had allowed Roman government authorities to confiscate and destroy his church’s copies of the Scriptures during the Great Persecution of 303-304. Called Donatists after one of their leaders, Donatus of Casae Nigrae, these Christians identified with the “church of the martyrs.” Donatist Christians denounced the “unholy alliance” between Catholic Christians and the Roman state. Echoing Chrysostom’s principle, they insisted that the church must employ only spiritual sanctions and not force.

Yet Augustine abandoned the policy of toleration practiced by the previous bishop of Carthage and pursued the attack on the Donatists. Like Chrysostom, he praised the church’s use of persuasion, not force; yet he himself, after beginning with polemics and propaganda, turned increasingly to force. First came laws denying civil rights to non-Catholic Christians; then the imposition of penalties, fines, eviction from public office; and finally, denial of free discussion, exile of Donatist bishops, and the use of physical coercion. According to Catholic historians, the Donatist cause became increasingly identified with active resistance to authority, including outbreaks of violence. Despite his earlier misgivings, Augustine came to find military

force “indispensable” in suppressing the Donatists and “wrote the only full justification, in the history of the early church, of the right of the state to suppress non-Catholics.” He came to realise, he explained, that fear and coercion, which Chrysostom had considered necessary only to govern outsiders, were necessary within the church as well; many Christians as well as pagans, he noted regretfully, respond only to fear.

After Augustine had spent more than thirty years battling the Donatists, he was dismayed to confront Christians he called the Pelagians who, despite many differences, as we shall see in Chapter 6, shared with the Donatists both a sectarian view of the church and an insistence on free will. When his own party was outvoted in the Christian synods, Augustine unhesitatingly allied himself with imperial officials against the clergy who defended Pelagius. In 416 Innocent, bishop of Rome, received from African synods two condemnations of Pelagian ideas, together with a long personal letter from Augustine and his closest associates as well as an open letter from Augustine challenging Pelagius. The documents went beyond a condemnation of Pelagius and his followers. They went on to warn, in Peter Brown’s words,

that the ultimate consequence of [Pelagian] ideas . . . cut at the roots of episcopal authority... The documents claimed that by appeasing the Pelagians the Catholic church would *lose the vast authority it had begun to wield as the only force that could “liberate” men from themselves.*

Pelagius’s supporters would make the counterclaim (and with reason) that they were following ancient tradition concerning the church and human nature - tradition most recently championed by John Chrysostom himself. But the declarations of the African synods, engineered primarily by Augustine and his associates, signalled a major turning point in the history of western Christianity. They offered to the bishop of Rome and to his imperial patrons a clear demonstration of the political efficacy of Augustine’s doctrine of the fall. By insisting that humanity, ravaged by sin, now lies helplessly in need of outside intervention. Augustine’s theory could not only validate secular power but justify as well the imposition of church authority - by force, if necessary - as essential for human salvation.

Augustine, having outlived by twenty-seven years his exiled and disgraced colleague, achieved, unlike John Chrysostom, a position of extraordinary power and influence in the Roman world, until his death on 28 August 430. Augustine’s ideas certainly did not win immediate or universal acceptance. Throughout the following century, until the Council of Orange in 529, Augustine’s views were ardently debated. Even in the centuries following that council, which endorsed Augustine’s views, many theologians held - or were accused of holding - “semi-Pelagian” views. Yet far beyond his lifetime, even for a millennium and a half, the influence of Augustine’s teaching throughout western Christendom has surpassed that of any other church father. There are many reasons for this, but I suggest, as primary among them, the following: it is Augustine’s theology of the fall that made the uneasy alliance between the Catholic churches and imperial power palatable - not only justifiable but necessary - for the majority of Catholic Christians. Augustine’s doctrine, of course, was not, either for him or for the majority of his followers, a matter of mere expedience. Serious believers concerned primarily with the deeper questions of theology, as well as those concerned with political advantage, could find in Augustine’s theological legacy ways of making sense out of a situation in which church and state had become inextricably interdependent.

The eventual triumph of Augustine’s theology required, however, the capitulation of all who held to the classical proclamation concerning human freedom, once so widely regarded as the heart of the Christian gospel. By the beginning of the fifth century those who still held to such archaic traditions - notably including those the Catholics called Donatists and Pelagians - came to be condemned as heretics. Augustine’s theory of Adam’s fall, once espoused in simpler forms only by marginal groups of Christians, now moved, together with the imperially supported Catholic church that proclaimed it, into the center of western history.

During his later years, as we have seen, Augustine argued against those who agreed with John Chrysostom, and then against followers of Pelagius, both of whom insisted that Christians, through their baptism, are free to make moral choices; that, although our will cannot affect the course of nature, it can - and must - effect our moral decisions.’ By 417, the city of Rome was so divided between the supporters and the opponents of Pelagius that partisans of both sides had actually rioted in the streets. Two years earlier, two councils of bishops in Palestine had declared Pelagius orthodox; but two opposing councils of African

bishops, led by Augustine and his colleagues, condemned him and persuaded Pope Innocent, bishop of Rome, to take their side. When Innocent died, his successor, Pope Zosimus, at first declared Pelagius's teaching orthodox; but after receiving vehement protests from Augustine and other African bishops, he reversed himself and excommunicated Pelagius.

By this time, too, Christian bishops had learned to use for their own purposes not only ecclesiastical censure but also imperial power. During the battle against Pelagius and his advocates, many of them influential Romans, Augustine and his colleagues openly courted the emperor's support. Augustine's friend and fellow African bishop Alypius brought eighty Numidian stallions as bribes to the imperial court and successfully lobbied there against Pelagius. The result gratified Augustine: in April 418, not only did the pope excommunicate Pelagius, but the emperor Honorius condemned the newly declared heretic and ordered him fined, expelled from office, and exiled along with his intransigent supporters.

The exiled Pelagius died soon afterward; but the most energetic of his followers refused to yield. Julian of Eclanum, an articulate and intellectual young Italian bishop, took up Pelagius's views and extended them. Julian even dared challenge the powerful Augustine, the most famous theologian of his day, and engaged the aging bishop in a battle that obsessed Augustine during the last twelve years of his life.

Augustine, summoning all his eloquence and fury, argued for a view of nature utterly antithetical to scientific naturalism. It was human choice - Adam's sin - that brought mortality and sexual desire upon the human race and, in the process, deprived Adam's progeny of the freedom to choose not to sin. Augustine amplified his argument in the six volumes of his *Opus Imperfectum Contra Julianum* ("Unfinished Work Against Julian"). Although Augustine is perhaps the greatest teacher of the church, this last work of his has so far remained untranslated into English.

Augustine's views prevailed, but the question is why? Why did the eloquent, passionate, and politically able Augustine finally succeed, after more than a decade of struggle, in having Pelagius's powerful supporters and friends, many of whom were monks, priests, bishops, and lay Christian persons, condemned as heretics, exiled, and deposed? How did Augustine persuade the majority of Christians that sexual desire and death are essentially "unnatural" experiences, the result of human sin?

Certainly neither Pelagius nor Augustine set out to be "scientific" in anything like our sense of the word; neither, I suspect, would have regarded the term as a compliment. Instead, both began their reflections upon the natural universe with a common religious perspective, beginning with Genesis 1-4, from which each drew very different conclusions.

Pelagius, who shared the common Christian conviction that nature was good, as God created it, and that humankind was morally free, made in God's image, was dismayed when he first read Augustine's "Confessions." For years Pelagius had respected Augustine's work, especially *On Free Will*, the treatise praising human freedom that Augustine had written as a young man. But when Augustine wrote his "Confessions" in his mature years, he declared that he had overestimated the power of human freedom. Now, he said, he realized that human beings are not free, as Adam was, to resist sin. We have no power to choose not to sin, and we cannot even control our sexual impulses. What is worse, "fleshly desire" - *concupiscentia carnis* - involves far more than its surface manifestations, which are only a symptom of deeper impulses that baffle, confound, and defeat our best attempts to control them. Yet since everyone is conceived, as Augustine argued, through sexual desire, and since sexual desire is transmitted to everyone through the very semen involved in conception, he concludes, as we have seen, that all humankind is tainted with sin "from the mother's womb."

Augustine's theory, as we have also seen, was a radical departure from previous Christian doctrine, and many Christians found it pernicious. Many traditional Christians believed that this theory of "original sin" - the idea that Adam's sin is directly transmitted to his progeny - repudiated the twin foundations of the Christian faith: the goodness of God's creation; and the freedom of the human will. Most Christians agreed, at any rate, that even if before baptism we are stained by sin - Adam's sin and our own - baptism cleanses the believer from all sin, so that, in the words of the Egyptian teacher Didymus the Blind, "now we are found once more such as we were when we were first made: sinless and masters of ourselves." In their argument with Augustine, Pelagius and his followers could claim the support of the revered fathers of the church, from

Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria in the second century through John Chrysostom in the fourth.

According to his biographer Georges de Plinval, Pelagius himself had once agreed with the majority of his Jewish and Christian contemporaries - and with Augustine himself, for that matter - that death came upon the human race to punish Adam's sin. Yet as Augustine developed his view into a theory of human depravity, Pelagius's followers came to argue the opposite. Universal mortality cannot be the result of Adam's punishment, since God, being Just, would not have punished anyone but Adam for what Adam alone had done; certainly he would not condemn the whole human race for one man's transgression. Mortality, therefore, must belong to the Structure of nature: mortality, which human beings share with every other species, is not, nor ever was, within the power of any human being to choose or reject.

Julian of Eclanum, the son of one of Augustine's fellow bishops, and himself the bishop of a provincial town in southern Italy, saw the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine engage Christians from Rome to Africa. Julian, who once shared the nearly universal admiration for Augustine's learning and teaching, became convinced that on the question of nature, the aging bishop was simply wrong. He charged, too, that Pelagius's opponents had engineered his condemnation through personal influence at court, bribery, and false accusations. He himself intended to defend Pelagius's views through the serious theological debate he believed they deserved. Thus Julian championed and extended the ideas earlier expressed by John Chrysostom and other Christian teachers in order to reduce to absurdity Augustine's idea of original sin.

Augustine's enormous error, Julian believed, was to regard the present state of nature as punishment. For Augustine went further than those Jews and Christians who agreed that Adam's sin brought death upon the human race: he insisted that Adam's sin also brought upon us universal moral corruption. Julian replied to this that "natural sin" does not exist": no physically transmitted, hereditary condition infects human nature, much less nature in general. To understand the human condition, Julian says, we must begin by distinguishing what is natural from what is voluntary. Which conditions belong to the structure of nature, and so to "acts of God" beyond our power, and which depend upon human choice? What is natural, and therefore beyond our will, and what is voluntary? Such questions led both Julian and Augustine back to Genesis, and each claimed its authority. Julian insisted that neither death nor sexual desire troubled Adam and Eve in Paradise, for both death and desire were, "from the beginning," natural:

God made bodies, distinguished the sexes, made genitalia, bestowed affection through which bodies would be joined, gave power to the semen, and operates in the secret nature of the semen - and God made nothing evil.

What about death? Doesn't Genesis teach that death is punishment for sin? Certainly, Julian responds, but not *physical* death. He insists that the death one suffers as punishment for Adam's sin is different from the universal mortality natural to all living species. Although the Genesis account says that God warned Adam that "on the day" of his transgression, "you shall surely die," Adam did not die *physically*. Instead, Julian says, Adam began to die morally and spiritually from the day he chose to sin. Adam's progeny confronts the same choice that Adam faced. For God gives to every human being what he gave to Adam - the power to choose one's own moral destiny, the power to choose the spiritual way of life or spiritual self-destruction. As for original sin, "*the merit of one single person is not such that it could change the structure of the universe itself.*" But Augustine insists that through an act of will Adam and Eve did change the structure of the universe; that their single, wilful act permanently corrupted human nature as well as nature in general. Augustine's position is paradoxical in that he attributes virtually unlimited power to the human will but confines that power to an irretrievable past - to a lost paradise. According to Augustine, human power alone reduced us to our present state, one in which we have wholly lost that power. In our present state of moral corruption, what we need *spiritually* is divine grace, and what we need *practically* is external authority and guidance from both church and state.

Augustine's argument has persuaded the majority of western Catholic and Protestant theologians to agree with him; and many western Christians have taken his interpretation of this passage for granted. But, as Peter Gorday has shown, when we actually compare Augustine's interpretation with those of theologians as diverse as Origen, John Chrysostom, and Pelagius, we can see that Augustine found in Romans 7 what others had not seen there - a sexualized interpretation of sin and a revulsion from "the flesh" based on his

own idiosyncratic belief that we contract the disease of sin through the process of conception. Other theologians assumed that Paul used these words to dramatize the situation of one who, still unbaptised and unredeemed, lacks hope; for Paul goes on to praise God for his own freedom, found in Christ:

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free. - (Romans 7:25; 8:2)

Augustine alone applied the despairing expressions of the previous passage to the baptized Christian; other readers assumed that the triumphant and joyful note of the rest of the chapter expressed Paul's experience of his life in Christ.

Julian often attends more carefully than Augustine to the wording and context, but he, too, reads his own experience - experience very different from Augustine's - into the biblical texts. The controversy between Augustine and Julian, as the German scholar Bruckner says, comes down to a clash between "two different world-views." Bruckner happens to side with Augustine, claiming that "the strength of Augustine's view must be in his 'deeper experience of life' "(which depths Bruckner does not elaborate). Augustine's argument may be arbitrary, but Bruckner contends that his "deeper religious experience ... more adequately interprets the contents of the Holy Scriptures than the *superficial rationalism* of Julian." The British scholar John Ferguson disagrees and sides instead with his fellow Briton Pelagius. What Bruckner takes as evidence of Augustine's "deeper religious experience" Ferguson sees as his stubborn refusal to acknowledge the data of ordinary experience:

There is another side to our experience, of equal validity, and that is our knowledge of our own free will. It is there that Augustine lapses alike from logic and from common human experience.

And so, after 1600 years, the argument goes on.

If Julian's argument looks simple - merely common sense - that simplicity is deceptive. In fact, it presupposes a Copernican revolution in religious perspective. That we suffer and die does not mean that we participate in guilt - neither Adam's guilt nor our own. That we suffer and die shows only that we are, by nature (and indeed, Julian would add, by divine intent), mortal beings, simply one living species among others. Arguing against the penal interpretation of death, Julian says, "If you say it is a matter of *will*, it does not belong to *nature*; if it is a matter of nature, it has nothing to do with *guilt*."

Like Copernicus's revolution, Julian's threatens to dislodge humanity, psychologically and spiritually, from the centre of the universe, reducing it to one natural species among others. He rejects Augustine's primary assumption that Adam's sin transformed nature. To claim that a single human will ever possessed such power reflects a presumption of supernatural human importance. When Augustine claims that a single act of Adam's will "changed the structure of the universe itself," he denies that we confront in our mortality a natural order beyond human power. For Augustine insists that we became susceptible to death solely through an act of will: "Death comes to us by *will*, not by *necessity*."

Why did Catholic Christianity adopt Augustine's paradoxical - some would say preposterous - views? Some historians suggest that such beliefs validate the church's authority, for if the human condition is a disease, Catholic Christianity, acting as the Good Physician, offers the spiritual medication and the discipline that alone can cure it. No doubt Augustine's views did serve the interests of the emerging imperial church and the Christian state, as I have tried to show in the preceding chapter. For what Augustine says, in simplest terms, is this: human beings cannot be trusted to govern themselves, because our very nature - indeed, all of nature - has become corrupt as the result of Adam's sin. In the late fourth century and the fifth century, Christianity was no longer a suspect and persecuted movement; now it was the religion of emperors obligated to govern a vast and diffuse population. Under these circumstances, as we have seen, Augustine's theory of human depravity and, correspondingly, the political means to control it - replaced the previous ideology of human freedom.

Finally, we have seen how Christian views of freedom changed as Christianity, no longer a persecuted movement, became the religion of the emperors. Augustine not only read into the message of Jesus and Paul

his own aversion to “the flesh,” but also claimed to find in Genesis his theory of original sin. In his final battle against the Pelagians, Augustine succeeded in persuading many bishops and several Christian emperors to help drive out of the churches as “heretics” those who held to earlier traditions of Christian freedom. From the fifth century on, Augustine’s pessimistic views of sexuality, politics, and human nature would become the dominant influence on western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, and colour all western culture, Christian or not, ever since. Thus Adam, Eve, and the serpent - our ancestral story - would continue, often in some version of its Augustinian form, to affect our lives to the present day.

EPILOGUE

What, then, are you saying?” asked a friend of mine, himself a distinguished scholar of early Christianity. “Whose side are you on? Are you saying that the real Christianity is more like John Chrysostom and the Pelagians (God forbid) than like Augustine? Or are you just saying that they all made interesting and different, but all politically and motivationally mixed and a little bit crazy, responses to what they took to be the gospel?”

This question, coming from him, startled me, since he certainly knows from his own experience how historical investigation differs from religious inquiry. Yet his question reminded me that when I was a graduate Student at Harvard and dissatisfied with the representatives of Christianity I saw around me, I wanted to find the “real Christianity” - and I assumed that I could find it by going back to the earliest Christians. Later I saw that my search was hardly unique: no doubt most people who have sought out the origins of Christianity have really been looking for the “real Christianity,” assuming that when the Christian movement was new, it was also simpler and purer.

Some readers of this book, reflecting on the various ways that Christians interpreted Genesis throughout the first four hundred years of Christian history, may conclude that certain theologians - Augustine, or the Pelagians, for example - were opportunistic or mistaken; others will conclude the opposite. For my own part, I came to realise that using historical means to explore the origins of Christianity most often does not solve religious questions but can offer new perspectives upon these questions. I had long been impressed, for example, with Augustine’s perceptive and candid observations of his own experience in his “Confessions,” and with many of the psychological and theological in-sights he expresses in such works as the *City of God* and *On the Trinity*. Since graduate school I had taken for granted, too, the conventional orthodox view of Pelagius and his followers as superficial rationalists who stubbornly and inexplicably resisted the deeper truths of Augustinian theology. But after investigating Augustine’s views in the Pelagian controversy and those of his opponents, I concluded, as this book shows, that even his admirers would do well to reassess and qualify Augustine’s singular dominance in much of Western Christian history.

Finally, I came to see that more important, to me, than taking sides on such specific issues -especially since my own position has changed as my perspective and situation changed - is the recognition of a spiritual dimension in human experience. This recognition, after all, is what all participants in Christian tradition, however they disagree, share in common - and share, for that matter, with many people who are involved in Christian tradition only peripherally, or not at all.

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Comment : “It is sad that the author, Elaine Pagels, after putting tremendous effort into studying early Christianity to find the truth, cannot see that the Bible as we have it is the Word of God, and imagines that the apocryphal gospels and epistles might be important. I would have expected that someone as intelligent as she obviously is could not be duped so easily. But we can be grateful to her for her research showing that in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the church was already permeated with a multitude of false doctrines, about which there was enormous contention, Augustine introduced the worst false doctrine of all, sinful flesh. Elaine Pagels has documented the contention this caused at the time, but regrettably over the centuries since, the Augustinian doctrine of sinful flesh prevailed almost universally. We are thankful that Edward Turney and subsequent Nazarenes preserved the Truth.

John Stevenson