

The Nazarene Circular Letter No. 214

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Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends,

Loving greetings.

I could not think of anything to write about this time so I had a look in a folder in which I keep all sorts of notes and cuttings hoping to find some inspiration. I found a letter I had cut out of a newspaper and attached to it was my reply which I had asked the newspaper to forward to the writer, who was Reverend Michael Harper, Dean, British Antiochian Orthodox Church in Cambridge.

Rev. Harper had written his letter following a lengthy interview published in the same newspaper with the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. The letter was headed "AUGUSTINE'S SINS"

SIR - In your interview of Dr Rowan Williams and your leading article you show an enthusiasm for Augustine of Hippo that is not shared by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

It was Augustine who first argued for the inclusion of the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed – "the Holy Spirit who proceedeth from the Father and the Son" - which was a major cause of the split between the Western and Eastern churches. Almost as bad has been Augustine's influence on our understanding of humanity, believing as he did in original guilt and, therefore, the tacit denial of human freedom.

This teaching led ultimately to Calvinism and its pessimistic view of our humanity, and other Protestant aberrations. The logic of Augustine's position led him to the view that unbaptised babies, because they are tainted with original guilt, are consigned to hell. These views of human nature have always been rejected by the Orthodox Church.

Rev. Michael Harper.

I replied - : “After the interview with Dr. Rowan Williams, printed recently in the Daily Telegraph together with the leading article, presumably written by Charles Moore, I was delighted to read your letter a day or so later putting another view, and in my opinion a better view.

I hadn't heard it called original guilt before. It has always been 'original sin' in my time. It all amounts to the same thing however. A supremely depressing notion of a permanently depraved human nature and therefore, as you say, a tacit denial of free will which also means an in-built inability to obey the 10 commandments.

Some of my family were and still are Christadelphians and as a denomination they cling doggedly to the doctrine of original sin. But they are the only sect I know who carry this unscriptural assumption to its 'logical' conclusion by saying that, as Jesus was born of a woman he too had original sin and so had to die for himself. Such disagreeable aberrations I suppose are inevitable if you do not get your basic Biblical foundations right in the first place.

I regret to say I know very little about the Orthodox Church and its beliefs: I am more interested in beliefs than tradition: but if the Orthodox Church has had the insight to cast away the belief in original guilt with all its damaging implications, when practically all the rest of Christendom sticks to this falsehood, then clearly it is a church with much to recommend it. I am grateful for your timely words and I am pleased the Telegraph was sufficiently enlightened to print them.”

“I am the true vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

Love to all. Helen Brady

Following our discussions in the last three Circular Letters on “How Did Jesus Die?” we were pleased to receive the following article from Brother F.C.Blank:-

Hello Russell...,

Your comments following on from Allon's article in the last Newsletter (No 213) relating to the question of 'How Christ Died' have prompted my writing. I gathered from your remarks that you were not altogether persuaded that Christ died other than from the spear thrust; a view that I also hold.

I thought you might be interested to hear why I am inclined to see the spear thrust as being the actual cause of death. A view which has perhaps been influenced to a considerable degree by an article written by Alan F. Fowler in his book “Modern Medicine and the Bible.”

I was wondering if you have been privy to his thoughts in this regard? Basically they are as follows:

In Fowler's treatment of the subject, he points out that there were three unusual aspects of Christ's crucifixion:

1. Jesus died after only six hours on the cross
2. He died suddenly and was fully conscious to the end
3. His legs were not broken, but when the spear was thrust into His side blood and water flowed out

Taking this into account he then goes on to say that these three facts strongly support the understanding that Jesus died from the wound inflicted by the spear which was thrust into His side in terms of the account in John 19:34.

Then he elaborates as follows:

The fact that Jesus died after being on the cross for only 6 hours was remarkable. Crucifixion he points out was designed by the Romans to inflict the maximum pain, distress and humiliation and it usually took up to three days or more for persons who were previously in good health to actually die. It was meant to be slow and agonising. He states that there is no reason to believe that Jesus was not physically fit before his trial of infliction began and gives some reasons for this viewpoint.

Pilot's amazement that Jesus' was already dead when approached by Joseph of Arimathae, so much so that he sought confirmation. Hence Fowler's argument that something quite unusual had taken place to bring about Christ's death in such short time.

Then he examines the theories that Jesus died from shock, exhaustion, asphyxia and points out that such understandings cannot be harmonised with the Gospel record which informs us that he remained conscious to the end and announced the moment of His death in a loud voice, "It is finished." This is seen as being totally different to what would have been the case if He died of hypovolemic shock in which there would be a gradual clouding of consciousness followed by a period of coma. Different also from cardiac arrest, which would have left no time for Jesus to add His final words of committal, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit."

He then mentions that although the death of Jesus is described a little differently in the four Gospels, a collation of the records, which he gives in the book, shows that they are consistent in these regards.

Then he goes on to examine the speculation about the flow of blood and water from the spear wound, mentioning that all the theories he has looked at assume that the spear was thrust into a dead body. He looks at various medical versions that have been advanced. Then he comes to the punch line. He states that all the medical writers on the crucifixion, have failed to deal with the fact that blood will not flow out of a corpse, unless Jesus had a history of coronary thrombosis or a severe heart infection, for which there is no evidence.

He then expands on the reason why it is not possible for blood to flow out of a dead body, outlining the technicalities involved. Such facts he explains, show why blood would not flow from a dead person even if a spear had severed a large blood vessel or penetrated the heart. Then, as substantive evidence, he appeals to the practice of slaughter men, who know that blood cannot be drained from a recently killed animal. Thus their reason for first stunning an animal and then piercing a large blood vessel, so that the blood is expelled by the still beating heart.

After this, he then looks at the record of John 19:31-37 mentioning that a superficial reading suggests that Jesus was pierced after death. But goes on to point out that the Greek tense in verse 34 is aorist which is a past tense, but indefinite as to time in the past. Adding that the aorist can include both the English perfect and pluperfect tenses. Hence he claims an equally valid translation would read:

"And when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers had pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out."

In his view this is more logical because the passage is retrospective. **John is declaring that the spear thrust explains why Jesus' legs were not broken.** Verses 36-37 show that John is primarily concerned to show how these events were an exact fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, that the Messiah would be pierced and that His bones would not be broken (Psalm 22:16 and 34:20).

Finally he then looks at what he terms circumstantial evidence, pointing out that there was darkness for the last three hours on the cross (Matt 27:45) so only those close to the cross would have seen the spear thrust. John being one of the faithful few who kept vigil at the foot of the cross and one of the few witnesses of the event. He sees this as explaining the emphasis in John 19:35:

"And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; And he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe."

Finally he remarks that the piercing of a corpse on a cross would have been a senseless act, and to kill a victim of crucifixion in this way would have been an illegal act; no Roman soldier would have risked doing this without authority. So he questions, who gave the order and what was his motive? To him, the centurion in charge of the crucifixion was the authority, and his motive for ending the suffering of Jesus is evident in his exclamation, “Truly, this was the Son of God” (Matt 27:54). Adding, that Luke tells us that when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47).

What followed, Fowler sees as an act of mercy, mentioning that even a centurion would have been subject to strict Roman protocol. Thus he believes the order would have been carried out stealthily under the cover of darkness (Luke 23:44-45). He draws attention to the fact that shortly before Jesus died he uttered a despairing cry, “My God, why have you forsaken me.” Concluding, that God surely answered this prayer. The answer came through an act of mercy by a Roman centurion.

His last point is that Jesus is described as the ‘Lamb of God,’ a title which reminds us that He fulfils all the Old Testament sacrifices which were slain by the shedding of blood.

Also within the case made by Fowler is an examination of the disputed reference in Matthew 27:49. Whilst he does not make this a strong point of his case, he does mention that exclusion of the disputed words is not easily dismissed because they are included in the 4th Century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, 5th Century Codex Ephraemi, a number of Greek manuscripts, plus Palestinian Syriac manuscripts, an old Ethiopic version, a number of old Latin versions and 5 good manuscripts of the Vulgate.

That’s pretty much sums up his entire case, which provides much to think about and, in my opinion, holds together with what I term a “ring of truth”

I have drawn Fowler’s case to the attention of Allon and understand that he has just recently obtained a copy of his book so that he can consider his arguments more closely. I have pointed out to Allon why I think that Fowler’s viewpoint has not been effectively addressed by all that I have read on this matter to date, and wait to see if he has any further thoughts to add that may mitigate Fowler’s viewpoint.

I have been wondering whether the point made in Revelation 1:7 about those (collectively speaking) who pierced Jesus, is alluding to the pierced hands and feet or to the piercing that actually killed him? From what I have gathered it is highly unlikely that anyone bled to death as a result of crucifixion. The objective of crucifixion was to bring about death in a slow and agonising manner. The Romans knew how to impale someone on a cross without severing major blood channels in the arms and legs. To do so would defeat their purpose of prolonging pain and agony.

But, as I said to Allon, this is an interesting consideration, however when it is all boiled down, it probably doesn’t really matter what we conclude in this regard. The thing is, Jesus did die to effect our salvation and surely this is what is really important. How such death was accomplished can become a matter of pedantics to my way of thinking. Perhaps I am wrong in this regard; even though I tend to favour the view that Christ died as a result of the spear thrust.

Shall be interested to hear any thoughts this exchange of information may prompt.

With kindest regards and sincere love in Christ Jesus our Lord

F. C. Blank

* * *

Editorial Comment:

Our sincere thanks due to Brother F.C. Blank for his enlightening piece. The thought has also occurred to me that the Roman soldier who pierced the side of Jesus with his spear may have done it out of sympathy. The question also comes to mind whether or not the centurion on duty at the crucifixion was the same centurion from Capernaum, who had sent friends, elders of the Jews, to Jesus, early in His ministry, asking

that Jesus should heal his servant. (Matthew 8 and Luke 7). The centurion's friends said of him, 'He is worthy for whom thou should do this... for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.' This would help explain why the centurion should say "Truly this was the Son of God" and why he told one of the soldiers to end Jesus life quickly.

Then, in Acts 10 we read of Cornelius, a centurion in Caesarea, "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." Could this have been the same centurion? We see a progression here from a centurion who had faith in God and loved the Jewish people; then a centurion who wanted to shorten the suffering of Jesus and commanded a soldier nearby to thrust the spear into Jesus' side. Finally, the centurion who had obviously had faith in God for a long time, giving alms to the Jewish people and whose prayers were heard by God and the angel was sent to him, saying, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send to Joppa, and call for one called Simon..." This centurion was the first Gentile to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is perhaps speculation but I do wonder if it was the same centurion in all these occasions.

Russell.

I apologise for not having published the following article by Brother W.A.Hold. I 'rediscovered' this along with two other hand written articles whilst looking through some papers to see what could be discarded!

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Luke 24

The resurrection of Jesus Christ of which an account is given by Luke is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith and is attested by the strongest evidence that can be adduced in favour of any ancient fact. Let us consider the facts:

1. Jesus had often foretold His own death and resurrection. Matthew 12:40, 20:19.
2. There was no doubt that He was really dead, of this the Jews, the Romans and the disciples were all equally well satisfied.
3. Every proper precaution was taken to prevent His removal by stealing. A guard, usually consisted of sixty men, was placed at the tomb for the express purpose of keeping guard over the body of Jesus. The sepulchre was secured by a very large stone and by a seal.
4. On the third day the body of Jesus was missing; of this all were agreed. The High Priests did not dare to call this in question. They laboured therefore to account for it.

The disciples affirmed that Jesus was alive. The Jews hired the Roman soldiers to affirm that the body of Jesus was stolen while they were asleep and succeeded in making many of the people believe it.

This account of the Jews is attended with the following difficulties and absurdities. The Roman guard was composed of sixty men and were stationed there for the express purpose of guarding the body of Jesus. The punishment for sleeping while on guard in the Roman army was death and it is perfectly incredible that those soldiers should expose themselves in this manner.

The disciples were few in number, unarmed, weak and timid; they had just fled before those who took Jesus in the garden and how can it be believed that in so short a time they would dare to attempt to take away the body from a Roman guard - armed men expressly set there to defend the grave.

How could the disciples presume that they would find the Roman soldiers asleep? Or if they should, how was it possible to remove the stone and the body without even one of their number being awakened?

The regularity and order of the grave clothes show that the body had not been stolen. When men rob graves of the bodies they do not wait coolly to fold up the grave clothes and lay them carefully by themselves.

If the Roman soldiers were asleep how did they know that the disciples stole the body away? If they were awake why did they suffer it?

The whole account therefore was intrinsically absurd. On the other hand the account given by the disciples is perfectly credible; they account for the reason why the soldiers did not see the Saviour when He arose. Terrified at the vision of the angels they became as dead men.

The disciples affirmed that they saw Jesus. All the Apostles affirm this and many others. They affirmed this in Jerusalem, in the presence of the Jews, before the High Priests and all the people.

If the Jews really believed the account which they themselves had given, why did they not apprehend the disciples and prove them guilty of the theft and falsehood – things which they never attempted and which shew therefore that they did not credit their own report.

In regard to the Saviour they could not be deceived. The disciples had been with Him for three and a half years. They knew him as a friend, they had eaten and drunk with Him at the Last Supper before His death. Later, Thomas had put his fingers into His hands and side and conversed with Him, they were with Him forty days. There was enough of them to bear witness, the Law commonly requires not more than one or two competent witnesses, but there were eleven plain honest men who affirmed in all places and at all times that they had seen and conversed with their Lord.

Can it be possible that they could be deceived? They had given every possible evidence of their sincerity. They were persecuted, ridiculed, scourged and put to death for affirming this. Yet not one of them ever expressed the least doubt of the truth of the resurrection; they bore everything rather than deny that these things were true. They had no motive in doing this but for the love of God and the love of truth.

In our study of Luke 24 we read in verse 18, “Art thou a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known these things which are come to pass in these days?” and then in verse 21, “but we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel and beside this, today is the third day since these things were done.”

There were so many things that were remarkable in Jesus and there was so much evidence that He was the Messiah, yet all their worldly hopes had been dashed to the ground so suddenly by their Master’s death; and because they did not understand the meaning of the Law of Sacrifice which pointed to Christ’s death as a ransom they were confused and knew not what to think.

Possibly they had been brain washed by the leaders of Israel which it seems kept the common people ignorant of the Scripture, which may be partly true, since they were so concerned about their ordinary mundane things of life that the people, like the present generation, relied upon the teaching of others without questioning their authority as compared with God’s revelation. Unless we study God’s Word we too will be open to the false doctrines of those by whom we are surrounded; so many claims to the truth are presented today each with their own interpretation of the Scriptures, that it behoves us to be well established in our beliefs.

There is one thing which we can rest assured about – individually we stand. We are the master’s of our own destiny; if we therefore place our trust in any professors of truth without a careful study of the whole plan and purpose of God with us individually then we have only ourselves to blame when we are rejected.

The Revelation of God begins at Genesis and ends in the Book of Revelation; therefore the whole theme of the great scheme of redemption, the Atonement, must run smoothly through to the end. Alienated

by the disobedience of Adam and we in him upon the federal principle, now reconciled to God by the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Jesus Christ the Lamb without spot or blemish, separate from sinners.

We read in verse 45 – “Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.” How important this is! Our Lord teaches this to be true; Jesus instructs again the disciples because their outlook in regard to His teaching was a worldly one, thus He enables them to fully understand - to comprehend the meaning of the prophecies that foretold His death and resurrection.

The disciples had seen Him die, now they had seen Him risen. By His instruction and by the facts which no longer could be called in question their Lord had paid the price demanded by the law - a life for a life. They were now free men, free from even the Mosaic Law. They had been redeemed, bought with a price, not by silver or gold but by the precious blood of their Saviour.

If a man is willing to take the plain declarations of the Bible, he will be little perplexed. The design of God in opening our understanding is that we should become acquainted with the Scriptures. It is not that we may become wise above what is written but that we submit ourselves wholly to the Word of God.

Verse 47-50. “And that repentance and remission of sins,” legal and personal, “should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem, and ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endowed with power from on high.” Beginning in Jerusalem – this was the dwelling place of His murderers and it shows His readiness to forgive. It was the Holy Place of the Temple; the place of the solemnities of the ancient dispensation; to which the Messiah came and it was proper that the Gospel was preached here among the ancient people of God, offering them pardon through their own Messiah.

“Ye are witnesses of these things,” said Jesus to His disciples; ‘witness of my death, my sufferings and my resurrection.’ How solemn was their office to testify these truths to the world, and in the face of death to proclaim these truths to all nations.

In a similar manner all true followers of Jesus Christ are witnesses; they are the evidence of His mercy and His love, for which He paid with the price of His life, and our duty lies in the fact that we must declare these truths so that others may be brought to see the infinite love of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

We read in the 56th verse of Chapter 23, together with a few thoughts upon the phrase “And they rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.” In this verse we see that the Sabbath was made or commanded for men. But in this present dispensation of grace it is the first day of the week which is observed. What was the main idea? Was it not that man should rest from his toil, rest from the anxieties of a workaday life; to give him an opportunity to call off his attention from earthly concerns and direct his mind to the affairs of God’s revelation to man. It was, and it is a kind of provision for man that he might refresh his body by relaxing his labours; that he might have undisturbed time to seek the consolations of the Gospel, to cheer him in the anxieties and sorrows of a troubled world, that he might render that homage which is most justly due to God, the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor and Redeemer through the gift of His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

This is easily capable of proof for no institution has been so signally blessed to man’s welfare than the first day of the week and this leaves the whole of mankind with the opportunity to worship God in Spirit and in truth and to take an interest in their own salvation. On that day the poor and the ignorant as well as the learned have the undisturbed time to learn the requirements of the true Christian faith; also the nature of morals from the Law of God and the way of salvation.

On the first day a man may offer his praises to the great giver of all good, and in the sanctuary seek the blessings of Him whose favour is life. This thought directs us to the assurance of the disciples, the days of their mourning were ended. They were filled with happiness at the assurance of the final redemption; they experienced joy at the glad tidings that the Saviour had died and risen and had ascended to His father and they had an earnest desire to pour forth in the sanctuary, prayers and thanksgiving to the God of grace for His mercy to a lost and misled world that they had the key of knowledge.

“If Christ be not risen, then is your faith in vain, and ye are dead in your sins,” legal and personal. It was necessary that Christ should be risen from the grave to show to the whole world that He was an acceptable sacrifice required by the Law. Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, outside Adamic condemnation.

Because of this God could not suffer His Holy One to see corruption, but He raised him up from the dead.

W.A.Hold 91999)

God Manifestation

The following article concerning the doctrine of God-manifestation was written by Ernest Brady as the Editorial for the Circular Letter for July 1970.

My dear brethren and sisters, Loving greetings in Jesus' name.

Some time ago someone kindly sent me a manuscript criticising what I wrote in my booklet “The Truth about Clean Flesh” (now published under the title, “What God Hath Cleansed”) concerning what Christadelphians call “the doctrine of God-manifestation.” I stated that they believe that Jesus was a mixture of human and divine nature and I quoted from their literature various passages which appear to me to be clear evidence of this. I went on to explain that if it were true that because He was the Son of God Jesus had a nature in any way different from ours He was not a real man at all and therefore He could not have experienced temptations like other men. We consider that the fact that Jesus was born to Mary as a normal child proves that physically He was the same as we are. The fact that He was conceived by a miracle only affected His relationship; He was the Son of God, not the Son of Joseph. Adam was a son of God; he did not receive his life from a human father but direct from God, but he was nevertheless a human being. In a different, though similar way, Jesus received His life direct from God and this gave Him a son's relationship to God but not divine nature.

This simple reasoning seems to have impressed my critic, since he has gone to some length to deny completely that Christadelphians believe in a dual nature.

It amazes me that anyone could have the audacity to deny a fact which all we who have been Christadelphians know to be true and which their own writers and speakers inevitably come to whenever they have to deal with the problem of how Jesus was able to live a sinless life when He had in His flesh the physical principle of sin. They can only explain that because He was the Son of God He had a divine side which enabled Him to overcome sin. Naturally they never very much like to be pinned down on the point, because they can see there is a serious flaw in their theory. It does not require a degree in law to see that if Jesus was born with a moral strength which no other man ever had, there was no great credit in His excellence. Conversely, if we inherit from Adam a moral depravity which makes it impossible for us to be good then there is no great blame due to us that we are bad. I have no doubt that my critic, like many Christadelphians, can see this and they don't like what they see, but unfortunately something prevents them from doing anything to correct the position. His defence is to write and chastise me anonymously. If he had signed his article or if I had any means of knowing who he is, I would have replied to him. But this is the last thing he wants. If he can snipe unseen, from behind a wall or strike in the dark and make off before being identified I suppose he feels he has accomplished something useful. Personally I feel like Jesus said, “He that is of the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be seen, whether they are good or evil.”

He says,

“It was not pioneer Christadelphians teaching that Christ's birth resulted in a person who was a mixture of human and divine nature.”

He charges me that I have “palmed-off” this falsehood from wrested extracts from Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts. This is a serious charge to make against anyone and if he had signed his name I should have wanted to ask him how he justified it. If I have played any tricks with Christadelphian writings it would have been a simple matter to expose me as a cheat and a deceiver and I am very sure that there are those who would have done it long ago had they been able, so I am not very worried about stupid insinuations unsupported by either evidence or reason. Let us see whether I have misquoted or whether my critic is twisting the facts. He quotes me quite correctly as follows:-

“It has been precisely stated by Dr. Thomas when he said (in Elpis Israel I believe from memory) “Jesus had two sides, the one Deity, the other man” and also by R. Roberts who said “he (Jesus) was flesh embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit.””

These statements appear to me to define clearly a belief that Jesus was a dual nature or a mixture of human and divine. But my critic does not think so - he says

“Both these statements are simple to understand (?) and are perfectly scriptural (?) but neither of them say that when in the flesh Christ was a mixture of human nature and divine nature.”

That is what he says but I am sure that anyone reading them without prejudice would think otherwise.

They are not simple to understand; they are not scriptural; and they do imply, if not in precise words, in effect, that Jesus was at the same time human and divine.

Apparently my critic takes exception to my describing the thought embodied in these statements of Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts as meaning that Christ was a “mixture” of human and divine. But if you say that Jesus had two sides, one Deity and the other man, how can this be true unless He was in some way a little of both? If the God-side of Him and the man-side of Him were not mixed together in one nature there must have been somewhere a dividing line between the one and the other. If this was so, where was the division? I will agree that put like this the question is absurd, but it is absurd because the statement upon which it is based, namely that Jesus had two sides, is absurd.

It is the same kind of mystical non-sense as Trinitarians use when they attempt to justify their belief that Jesus was the second person of a trinity God-head. If Dr. Thomas had said that Jesus was a man having a relationship to God because He was His Son in a very special sense this would have been correct. But he did not say this; he says Jesus had two sides. My critic tries to make out that the Christadelphian doctrine is not concerned with our Lord’s physical nature, but this is where R. Roberts’ evidence comes in. He declares categorically that “Jesus was flesh-embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit.” How any honest person can possibly assert that this does not mean that Jesus was physically in some way different from all other men I cannot imagine.

As I have already indicated, it appears to me that this anonymous Christadelphian has realised the falseness of the teaching to which he is committed and is trying to make out that it is not what it has always been. We owe a lot to Dr. Thomas and I willingly admit that apart from his work neither we of the Nazarene Fellowship nor Christadelphians might exist at all as Christian believers but I do not think this justifies us in closing our eyes to the fact that he was fallible and when he made a mistake (as in this case) it could be a big one. He had undoubtedly a tremendous knowledge of the scriptures and a deep reverence for the things of the Spirit, but more than once in his work he built up a sound scriptural argument and then crowned it with a blunder left over from his earlier orthodoxy. This is what he did in regard both to original sin and to what he called God- manifestation, which was really a remnant of Trinitarianism.

Very remarkably, after denying my charge that Christadelphianism makes Jesus into a being neither a man nor God but a combination, goes on to quote Dr. Thomas in “Eureka,” where he says:-

“In these testimonies it was revealed that Christ was to be the Son of Man and Son of Deity. How this could be otherwise than is related in the N.T. would be impossible to devise.”

He is, of course, referring to the record of Mary's miraculous conception and the birth of Jesus, a man who was the Son of God and in this we are in full and complete agreement. But Dr. Thomas went further than scripture – he went beyond any of the facts or prophetic testimonies of either the old or the new testaments which he adduced or any of the reasoning which he had advanced, when he went on:-

“Was the product, therefore, not Deity?”

I answer emphatically NO, the product was not Deity. The product was a man. This is the clear teaching of scripture and anyone who says that He was God is denying a first principle of the truth. Dr. Thomas made a serious error here and Christadelphians have inherited it from him. It amounts to a denial that Jesus came in the flesh. It is no use Christadelphians denying their belief or arguing that Dr. Thomas did not mean what he said, because he continues in the same passage to ask a further rhetorical question to the same effect:-

“Did the union of spirit with flesh annihilate that spirit and leave only flesh?”

There is not a word in the record to suggest that in the birth of Jesus there was a union of spirit with flesh. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, as foretold by the Angel, causing her to conceive. Where is there any least justification for affirming that her child was therefore a union of spirit with flesh? And to ask if the flesh annihilated the spirit is a piece of rhetorical nonsense which has for about 150 years succeeded in preventing people from examining the lack of evidence or reasoning which it conceals. Dr. Thomas goes on again, with another question and this one he answers:-

“Was the holy thing born a mere son of Adam, or the fellow and equal of the Deity? The latter unquestionably.”

I do not know what my Christadelphian critic makes of this but it is quite clear that Dr. Thomas believed that Jesus was a man with a mixture of divinity in Him.

Neither Dr. Thomas in his day, nor his followers today understands the issue or the explanation.

It is not that Jesus was either (1) a mere son of Adam or (2) a divine man. He was not the son of Adam, merely or especially, but a man of the same flesh and blood as Adam and related to Adam through His mother.

The difference between Jesus and all other human beings is that His life came to Him, by the miracle related, direct from God. His life was not a bit of the Adamic life; He was a fresh creation of the same nature out of a mother who was a daughter of Adam. That is the vital element of truth which Dr. Thomas missed and which Christadelphians still lack. This is why they do not and cannot understand the Atonement or recognise and appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus when He gave Himself for us to redeem us to God.

“O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him... as a son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,” Hebrews 3:1.6.

Our love and greetings to you all... your brother in the one hope,

Ernest Brady.

Brother Phil Parry recently received the following anonymous letter from a reader of our Circular Letter:

Friday, 17 June 2005

Dear Brother Phil, Greetings in the name of our Redeemer,

First I must apologize for writing this letter anonymously. I gather from talking to the late Bro. Eric that your Sunday arrangements are liable to be intermittent. There are a few ("Central") ecclesias where your flock are welcome, otherwise you need to travel, or break bread at home.

As travel is now a real problem to me I am opting to stay in fellowship with Christadelphia yet with a personal rejection of Clause 5. I thank you for your efforts to clarify this matter and should you wish to comment, by magazine, on your Sunday situation for my - and others - benefit I shall be glad to read.

If you wish to use the attached please do so. Anything to support the scriptural rendering without man made intervention must be an advantage. This study sprang to life as a result of a question session where, apparently, impossible questions were asked. These were:-

Did Adam do no work until after his sin? In other words (if this is true) "work" was part of his punishment.

If this was right what did Adam do immediately after he was created?

What did Adam and Eve do after Eve was formed?

Why did Eve start talking to the serpent in the first place?

How long was it after creation before the first sin took place?

The questions above are not answered by studies, from yourselves, in fact the idea of creation being based on degeneration was enough to superimpose itself on these.

I seem to remember reading somewhere that animals were not designed to have a total change of diet, i.e. a lion cannot eat straw (what happened during the flood?). Any comments? If you can refer an original of yours I shall have to confess who I am if I want a copy!

Some of these questions were quite unnecessary so with a view to getting a better idea of the background to life immediately after creation I studied out the details on the reverse.

Wondering what I could discover about creation managed to coincide with a settling in period with a Strong's concordance. Here I managed to discover that the Hebrew behind animal names frequently refers to some characteristic of the animal. Hence I refer you to the list of animals mentioned in the Bible lists of clean and unclean [attached]. Here I found that out of 57 animal names collected, 54 referred to their life style. From this I conclude that Adam was caused to develop a better understanding of God's [Hebrew? – see Zephaniah 3:9] language by giving names which were the result of what he saw around him.

Whether you use or not this may present an opportunity to expand further and hopefully give more support to scripture as we see it.

In the Hope of Israel.

Attached list:-

Animals Birds and Insects found in the Bible. This list shows how the meaning of each name in Hebrew connects each animal to some characteristic of its life.

Asp = Twist, Ass = Patience, Bear = Slow, Bee = Orderly Motion, Behemoth = Water Ox, Bull = Ox Strength, Bullock/Cattle = Dividing the hoof, Heifer = Requires care/Herd instinct/Grazing - Consuming Food /(Chewing Cud), Calf = Frisking, Caterpillar = Devourer, Chameleon = Hardness (of skin), Coney = Conceal, Cormorant = Casting self into sea/Vomits food for young, Crocodile = Elongated sea-monster, Deer = Red, Dog = Yelp, Dove = Warmth of mating, Dromedary = Swift beast, Eagle = Tender to

young/Lacerates flesh, Ferret = Crying out, Flea = Isolated, Fly/Mosquito = Swarm or flit, Fox = Burrower, Frog = Marsh-leaper, Goat = Prancing/Shaggy/Strong/Given to butting, Wild Goat = Slender, Grasshopper = Grubbing as a larvae, Locust = Ravager, Greyhound = Slender waist, Hawk Flashing/speed/Violence, Hornet = Stinging, Horse = Stretched out (neck), Lamb/Sheep = Grazing/Flock, Ram = Butting, Leopard = Spotted or stained (as by dripping), Lice = Fastening, Lion = Roar/Violence/Crushing Destructive blows, Lizard = Hiding, Mouse = Nibbling, Mule = Lonely habit, Ostrich = Plumage, Owl = Answering Cry, Partridge = To call out, Peacock = Strident sound, Quail = Slow in flight, Raven = Dusky hue, Roe = Conspicuous splendour, Serpent = Hiss/Crawl, Spider = Entangling, Snail = Floating (in own slime)/Lie low/Creeping, Sparrow = Hopping, Vulture = Screamer, Weasel = Gliding motion, Wolf = Yellow

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Comment:

We thank the writer for the above letter and we would rather receive an anonymous letter such as this rather than no letter at all. Nevertheless it is very sad that a fellow-Christian feels it necessary to keep his understanding to himself, unable to share it with his friends in the Christadelphian ecclesia for fear of attack or bullying or persecution or being 'put out of the synagogue' or for any other reason.

Because we are a small and widely scattered group the writer is concerned about our arrangements for meeting to remember the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice. Well, it must be the same for Christadelphians who are in isolation for they are also not able to meet in groups. But does it matter in the least? I think not. How many of the leading characters in the Scriptures met together with large numbers of like believers? I think they were the exception rather than the rule. And were they not the stronger for it? Their dependence upon the Lord was greatly enhanced in their isolation. It was my personal experience on Sunday mornings that it mattered very little who I was sitting with in the meetings or who was present in the room. I was aware that there were not many like minded brethren and sisters present but I searched for what truth and exhortation I could find and went away generally satisfied but rarely excited. I now find more satisfaction when remembering the Lord's sacrifice alone than I used to in the ecclesia. The meeting of minds that is of truest value is that between the Lord and ourselves.

Also I have on one or two occasions been asked if I would like to re-join an ecclesia, but, no, I choose not to. There is far too much difference between us and the followers of the B.A.S.F. Elsewhere in this Circular Letter there is a reprint of an editorial by the late Brother Ernest Brady which is worth reading in this connection.

The writer says that there are a few "Central" ecclesias where our flock is welcome but would they rather not know what we truly believe beforehand before they make us welcome? And if they knew what we rejected of their beliefs would they still make us welcome? It would narrow down the number of ecclesias who would welcome us to almost nil.

You make an interesting point regarding Adam naming all the animals, suggesting it was helpful to Adam by enlarging his understanding of the language God had given him.

I recall publishing something about the animals before the fall. Someone had suggested that all animals were vegetarians before Adam transgressed but afterwards some of the animals became carnivores. The suggestion I believe was that such a radical change to the digestive system did not happen as it would mean a 're-creation' about which were we not told. Then you query whether the lion ate straw like the ox during the year the animals were in the Ark. Again we are not told but the amount of provisions that would be needed for all the animals to spend a year in the Ark would indeed be very considerable. The thought occurs to me that perhaps God provided for them like He did for the Israelites in the wilderness, or perhaps like the widow's cruse of oil.

And while the writer considers our understanding of the Atonement to be correct he says he rejects only Clause 5 of the B.A.S.F. This is not all that needs rejecting of the Statement of Faith as Brother Phil Parry shows next.

Russell Gregory.

Brother Phil continues with his comments:-

“Dear Anonymous writer, You say you are opting to stay with Christadelphia but with a rejection of Clause V. Does this mean you support the remainder of the B.A.S.F Clauses? There is One Body – Christ is not divided.

For example Clauses VII and VIII referring to the promises made to Adam, Abraham and David – a condemned line from which Jesus was raised up. A condemnation of which in Scripture concerning the nature of flesh and blood there is no evidence or support - unless you can tell me when and how it came into existence and can explain it on the basis of the inspired Word of God.

I know from that Word how God condemned Adam’s sin. It was by Adam’s transgression of law and on that basis and by imputation all men were in the condemned line in the legal sense and not by their physical descent.

Clause IX. Another example to examine. If as stated, Jesus rose after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God, He rose from a death inflicted by the shedding of His blood, not a death by natural decay as stated in Clause V, but a sacrificial death in the place of that incurred by Adam and passed upon all men. Not personally but by imputation. We of the Nazarene faith meet for the Bread and Wine memorial service on that basis and as oft as we do it in remembrance of what Jesus did for us in taking away the Sin of the world. And to Him we owe our natural existence.

Clause XII. This is an absolute error and violation of the Love, Justice and mercy of God for He only allowed Jesus to be put to death by the Jews and Romans because Jesus chose it.

The first day of the week has been chosen by Christadelphia as the pagan Sunday, whereas I believe it to be the first day of the week of unleavened bread when the Passover is observed. And now as Jesus introduced it with His disciples – no longer type but Christ our Passover sacrificed for us.

Phil Parry

Editorial reproduced from our Circular Letter dated October 1970

Dear brethren and sisters, Loving greetings to all in the name of Jesus our Saviour.

During the several months which have passed since I sent out the last (July) Circular Letter we have seen developments of lawlessness and violence in almost every direction and although it is quite evident that the great majority of ordinary people in the world only want to live their own lives in peace, there are sufficient fanatics, busybodies and lunatics about to keep a whole world boiling on the edge of chaos for most of the time. There is only one hope and one solution and even those who would have no time for our expectation of the reign of Christ on earth are realising that only impartial justice and unlimited power of enforcement can solve the world’s problems.

Not many people have a very high opinion of the former Labour Foreign Secretary, George Brown, but in his memoirs he says “the creation of a World Authority, effectively able not only to decide but to enforce its decisions must be the aim...” In his busy political life he has probably never had the time to read say the 11th Isaiah - of one of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, who will not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after hearsay, but who will judge the cause of the poor with righteousness and reprove for the meek of the earth, but he has enough sense and experience to realise that such judgement is what the world is very short of today. Some people think all politicians are crooked and no doubt they are largely correct, but generally their intentions are good - what they lack is the wisdom and disinterestedness to do the

right thing in the right way. This will be provided for in the world as it will be, “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or when ye turn to the left.” (Isaiah 30:21).

During the summer we enjoyed a visit from three of our members from Canada and were greatly encouraged by the affirmation and interest they brought us. Bro. and Sis. Les James of the Peterborough meeting and their daughter Mary Lou spent several days with us and other brethren and sisters in Bournemouth and left us very happy memories.

Bro. Hold wrote to me from Australia asking me to express my opinion on a matter which is troubling him deeply. Several members of his meeting also attend Christadelphian meetings and even though they have been re-baptized, break bread with those who believe that Christ died because he had sinful flesh - or at any rate - if they do not believe this they appear to do so since they accept the B.A.S.F.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Christadelphian view is utterly and completely wrong and bad and contrary to the teaching of Scripture and I think that anyone who does anything that appears to support it or compromise with it is doing wrong. I know that many who are nominally Christadelphians do not in fact believe in unclean flesh or defiled nature and while I do not feel it would be right to refuse them if they wished to break bread with me, I feel it would be compromising what I believe to be the truth if I went to their meeting and broke bread there.

I can well understand the attraction exercised by one's friends and family connections in a large meeting and one may feel that there is more chance of influencing them in the right direction by attending than by cutting ourselves off but my own observation and experience proves this to be mistaken. Even to attend one of their lectures gives them the opportunity to tell themselves that the issues between us are only matters of different interpretation and that basically we are the same. It is only by an uncompromising stand for what we believe to be right that we can faithfully defend the honour of God and His Son. We may be unable to speak or write but this we can each do in witness for the truth. If it involves denying ourselves the pleasure and satisfaction of a meeting, so be it. It appears to be in the purpose of God that we should be few and scattered but this is a small tribulation in comparison with what many have had to endure. I say to Bro. Hold, ‘Let them alone - no man cometh except the Father draw him. If their judgement or their faith is so feeble that they cannot endure for a little and watch an hour or two with Him it will be their loss, not ours.’

Bro. Clem Heath has very kindly sent me a copy of “The Logos” of this September and in view of what H.P.Mansfield writes in it I am amazed that any brother who has an understanding of the truth should feel any desire to associate himself with his particular group. He has an article “What is Sin” and he quotes Dr. Thomas where he says

“Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature. Hence the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean.”

This statement, which is quite untrue, is the basis of the Christadelphian doctrine of sinful flesh and it was because we reject it that we were first called “the Clean Flesh heresy.” Actually we say that flesh, as flesh, is neither clean nor unclean and it is certainly not full of sin. The proof of this is in the fact -

- (1) Adam was flesh before he sinned.
- (2) A child is flesh when it is new-born and incapable of sin, and
- (3) Jesus was flesh, both in His natural life and after He was raised.

He was certainly never sin or a sinner. It says in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that He was “made sin for us,” but this means that He was made a sin-offering. The flesh is not invariably regarded as unclean. It can be legally unclean, but it can be ceremonially washed and it then becomes clean; but intrinsically it is simply the living tissue of which we are made. It is only when human beings are under law, by enlightenment and responsibility, that they may be either clean or unclean in Divine sight. Human nature is what God made when He created our race and it is, for its purpose and within the limits of natural law, still very good. It is capable of being, in individuals, either morally good or bad; as Jesus said, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; an evil man, evil things.” When Dr. Thomas said that

human nature and sin are synonymous terms he made a colossal blunder which (I think) he would be ready to acknowledge today. When he said, quoted by H.P.Mansfield,

“Children are born sinners or unclean, because they are born of sinful flesh,”

he said a most horrible and pernicious falsehood, but he is less to blame than those who quote him, because he was struggling out of apostate darkness where Original Sin had been unquestioned since Constantine. H.P.Mansfield and his fellows have had every opportunity to correct themselves, yet, because the doctrine of sinful flesh has been perpetuated in the Statement of Faith and they prefer loyalty to this to loyalty to Christ, they go on picking out of the Dr.’s works the passages which support it and pass over others which prove that he was inconsistent with himself.

In the Logos article he quotes from “Elpis Israel” Dr. Thomas words,

“The word ‘sin’ is used in two principle acceptations in Scripture. It signifies in the first place, the transgression of law; and in the next it represents that physical principle of the animal nature which is the cause of all its diseases, death and resolution into dust... it is called ‘sin’ because the development or fixation of this evil in the flesh was the result of transgression.”

H.P.Mansfield says that we (he calls us Renunciationists) deny this and affirm that wherever “Sin” occurs it means transgression of law. This is quite untrue and he must know that it is. We have never denied that there is a secondary and perhaps more important scriptural use of the word “Sin” than simply an act of transgression.

What we deny is that “Sin” means human nature, or that Sin is in human nature, or that flesh is sinful, or that “Sin” can be a physical principle of the animal nature. What it means must be decided by the context. Generally “sin” means an act of transgression, but sometimes the word is used in a special way peculiar to Scripture, when it represents “Sin” in general and in particular the first sin, personified and embodying everything which is in opposition to God. We have always recognised this and indeed, Edward Turney was the first Christadelphian to appreciate its Gospel and the Atonement. But this is the remarkable thing; although Dr. Thomas had got the false idea of “Sin” quoted above, he had also got the correct idea too and although he never appears to have seen the incongruity to which he was committed, he expounded it scripturally. To read the Logos one would never think that Dr. Thomas had any other idea than that Sin was human nature. Yet he wrote (“Elpis Israel” page 89):

“It is clear to my mind that ‘Sin’ is the thing referred to by the Apostle in the word ‘devil’.”

Two pages before he wrote:

“The Lord that dominates over them all from the days of Jesus to the present time, is Sin; the incarnate accuser and adversary of the Law of God, and therefore styled ‘the devil and Satan’.”

We think he was correct in these statements. They properly and correctly define what Scripture tells us, in highly figurative language, about the conflict between good and evil in the world and our human relationship to Divine things.

Dr. Thomas did not believe in a supernatural Devil or a literal Satan and neither do we; but if he was correct also when he wrote that “Sin” is the same as human nature then human nature is the Devil. If he was correct when he said “Sinful flesh being the hereditary nature of the Lord Jesus Christ he was a fit and proper sacrifice for sin” (Elpis Israel p. 115) he was saying that Jesus was the Devil. I do not think Dr. Thomas believed this or would ever have dared to say it if he did; but at least one Christadelphian, A.D.Norris has drawn the correct conclusion from the false premises and wrote, “When Jesus died upon the Cross the Devil hung there dead.” Dr. Thomas contented himself with declaring that it was “the purpose of God to condemn sin in the flesh; a thing which could not have been accomplished if there were no sin

there.” He does not seem ever to have considered that sin or sinfulness could be condemned by a practical demonstration of what sin deserved - that in fact every time a sacrifice was offered for sin, sin was condemned in the suffering of the innocent victim.

The lamb slain by the priest on the altar did not need to have sin literally in its flesh for the offering to be a sacrifice for sin or for it to be efficacious in securing the forgiveness of the sinner. Much less therefore is there any justification for the assertion that there had to be sin in the flesh of Jesus before His death could stand as a condemnation of Sin. Far less still for anyone to so turn the Gospel upside down that Jesus becomes the Devil and His death the destruction of the Devil. But this is what H.P.Mansfield and A.D.Norris have done - we can only suppose they do it ignorantly, in unbelief, but it is a grievous thing for Christians to find themselves propounding such a doctrine of devils. “Wash you, make you clean; - Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow”!

I thank all who have written, for their help and encouragement and hope you will continue to support our all too feeble and irregular efforts to keep the light shining.

With love to all, looking and hoping for the return of our Lord,

Your brother, Ernest Brady.

Brother Phil Parry comments on miscellaneous Christadelphian writings:

Edward Turney said that “sinful” applies to the character, not to the physical flesh.

Robert Roberts in denying this said too much:-

“It is a marvellous piece of new-born wisdom to say that sinful applies to
the character but not to the substance that produces the character.”

- “The Slain Lamb.”

Comment:

The substance can only reproduce the same substance; this is a pre-set law of the physical nature of divine creation and nothing to do with the Divine Law for the development of human character. Furthermore if Christ’s character was sinless then his substance (flesh) must have been sinless and righteous.

Dear Mr Roberts, your ‘slain lamb’ of sinful condemned flesh never existed – you have proved it!

* * * * *

Our Terrestrial System Before The Fall - Dr. J. Thomas

“Death and corruption then, is the fundamental Law of the six days; seasons of decay and death were institutions existing before the fall. Adam and Eve and all the other animals born of the earth with themselves, would have died and gone to corruption if there had been no further interference with the physical system than Moses records in the history of the six days.”

Comment:

Here Robert Roberts in 1869 was in agreement with Dr John Thomas but after 1871 with Dr Thomas off the scene, he claimed there was, through Adam’s transgression, an interference and change in Adam’s corruptible nature causing a process of decay and death. Thus refuting what he and Dr Thomas believed in 1869 with the evidence of Scripture that no change of physical nature took place with Adam, but a change of

his relationship to God legally and morally. So much for the man who wrote “Christendom Astray” and “The Visible Hand of God” and led Christadelphia astray with Clause V.

* * * * *

On the matter and subject of sin – See Peter Watkins’ article in the Christadelphian Magazine 1947:-

“Sin is a product of human flesh, and sin after baptism indicates a revival of the Adamic nature which we (Christadelphians) purported to destroy at baptism. Yet if we are still members of the body of Christ we are still without sin, for “in him is no sin.” If we are truly in Christ, it is not we that have sinned, but it is the irrepressible Adamic nature which we have been striving to mortify that has obtruded itself and we heartily deplore the fact. As long as we deplore our transgression – as long as they are committed despite ourselves and not because of ourselves, we remain in Christ and righteous.”

Comment:

Roman Catholicism or worse!

The Apostle John says “Sin is transgression of the law” therefore it is an act of violation of the law, not a product of Adamic flesh. A product of Adamic flesh is a baby – can the mother and father look upon their child when born and point the finger and say “this is sin”?

What a wide chasm between truth and error the doctrine of Original Sin has plunged the Christadelphian community! And it is we whom they falsely accuse of heresy, who have to tell them how to read their own written works effectively for their own good and enlightenment unto life!

Extract from a Berean Website:-

The doctrine that sets Christadelphians apart from all the churches of Christendom is the nature of man, and the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ. There are churches that have discovered *some* of the Bible’s Truth. Some know that the Bible does not teach the soul is immortal. Some know that the Bible does not teach the kingdom will be established in heaven, but rather on the earth. Still others know that the Bible does not teach anything about people burning for eternity in a fiery-burning hell. But there are no churches in Christendom that have correctly understood the most important subject of all Bible subjects; the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ. Not surprisingly then, this subject has been the greatest cause of division among Christadelphians.

Rom. 8:3 reads:

“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:”

Commenting on this in his book “Elpis Israel”, John Thomas wrote:

*Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature. Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean. It is therefore written, “How can he be clean who is born of a woman?” “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “What is man that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, God putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?” This view of sin in the flesh is enlightening in the things concerning Jesus. The apostle says, “God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin”; and this he explains in another place by saying, that “He sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” in the offering of his body once. *Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, if it had not existed there.* His body was as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died; for he was born of a woman, and “not one” can bring a clean body out of a defiled body; for “that”, says Jesus himself, “which is born of the flesh is flesh”.*

According to this physical law, the Seed of the woman was born into the world. The nature of Mary was as unclean as that of other women; and therefore could give birth only to “a body” like her own, though especially “prepared of God”. Had Mary’s nature been immaculate, as her idolatrous worshippers contend, an immaculate body would have been born of her; which, therefore, would not have answered the purpose of God; which was to condemn sin in the flesh; *a thing that could not have been accomplished, if there were no sin there.*

These paragraphs are both obvious and profound. The closer a person comes to understanding this, the closer they come to understanding the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on behalf of all mankind.

Renunciationists

John Thomas died in 1871. By 1872, this principle, which he had so simply and thoroughly explained, came directly under attack by some of his former friends. In 1872 Edward Turney issued a booklet called “The Sacrifice of Christ.” In it was the following statement:

“...(Another man has said) that for 15 years he has not been able to understand what Dr. Thomas meant by ‘sin in the flesh.’ That is the fixation of sin in the flesh which he speaks of in ‘Elpis Israel’ pg. 126, ...and I confess to you without reserve, neither have I been able to understand it. But still I have many a time taught it. I have taken the 15th article of the book of common prayer and pulled it to pieces, and said that Christ came in flesh full of sin; for said I to the people, what can ‘sinful flesh’ mean, but flesh full of sin? Well now, since my mind has been more especially directed to the study of this subject, I have arrived at this conviction that there is no such thing as flesh full of sin, and never was, nor can be.” “Sacrifice of Christ,” pg. 16.

Edward Turney reasoned that since Christ had only a human mother, his nature could not be the same identical nature as ours, since we have both human father and mother. He argued that since his nature was not the same as ours, Jesus did not have a sinful nature, and therefore did not offer for himself for the cleansing of that nature.

Edward Turney reintroduced to Christadelphians the idea that sin can only be moral. He agreed that man had sinful flesh, but he saw this as a moral transgression, just like the churches doctrine of original sin. He reasoned that if Christ had been born with this original sin, or sinful flesh, he would be condemned by it, and therefore not be in position to free us from sin.

Edward Turney was very clear that he was renouncing Christadelphian teaching. Therefore, his group came to be called the Renunciationists. He stated in his book:

“I have renounced the Papal myth of “sin in the flesh” by which Mr. Roberts (then editor of the Christadelphian Magazine) is yet bewitched...” “Sacrifice of Christ,” by Edward Turney, pg. 34

Since he plainly, and boldly, renounced Christadelphian thought, he found it difficult to get a following among Christadelphians. Christadelphians called his teaching “clean flesh”, because he taught the flesh of Christ was clean, while all the rest of mankind had sinful flesh. As a movement, he was so insignificant we would not bother with mentioning him, except that he introduced a thought that was the cause of much sorrow and division in the following years.

Many sound men rose up to show Edward Turney that his new ideas were unsound: that it was he who had returned to the doctrine of Catholicism (the Catholic doctrine of an immaculate Christ) not Christadelphians. Among these was a very polished man named J. J. Andrew of London, England.

As we mentioned, fundamental to Turney’s teaching was the argument that “sin” was a moral relationship, *only*. He argued that sin could have no physical existence. Christadelphians taught that sin was both moral and physical. We are guilty of the things we do (the moral aspect of sin) but we suffer the consequences of the sin bodies we physically and literally bare, (sorrow, weakness, and death). The moral

aspect of sin is a crime. The physical aspect is a misfortune, not a crime, but it is a *reality* none the less. Jesus came into the world bearing the physical sin in his body that through his sacrifice he might destroy sin at its very root, removing all sin, physical and moral, that the world might be purified from sin.

The physical sin body is the root of all moral transgression. *“Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”* (James. 1:14) By destroying sin in his body, Christ destroyed all sin at its very root and source.

* * *

Editorial Comment:

It is difficult to remain passive whilst reading the extract from the Berean website. It most certainly cannot be recommended for its accuracy in portraying the writings and convictions of Edward Turney.

Nor are the Bereans correct in describing themselves as the only sect with a doctrine about the nature of man that sets them apart from the rest of Christendom. It is ‘as plain as a pike staff’ that they believe with most of Christendom the Roman Catholics included, that men are born with “sinful flesh” or “original sin” as a result of Adam’s sin in Eden. The fallacy that this sin produced a change in Adam’s flesh which was transmitted to all following generations is common to all churches, with the exception, as I recently discovered, of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Bereans are correct, however and to their eternal shame, when they claim so proudly that Christadelphians are the only sect who believes Jesus Christ had this same “flesh full of sin” and so His death was in part for Himself.

For what may well be more than the thousandth time since Edward Turney put pen to paper in the 1800’s, Edward Turney did NOT believe, did NOT teach and did NOT write, either in his pamphlet “The Sacrifice of Christ” or anywhere else that Jesus’ flesh was any different from Adam’s before or after he sinned in Eden. Nor is the flesh of succeeding generations since Adam sinned any different from Jesus Christ’s “The constitution of man is precisely the same now as then; (at creation) he has no desires now which he had not then, that is to say he has not lost any of his old or first faculties, neither has he acquired any new ones.” (Edward Turney). Let us not forget Jesus was a man, yet the Son of God.

To reiterate, Adam’s flesh, and our dear Lord’s flesh is as it has always been right up to the flesh of those of us alive today in this 21st century. Flesh is as it was first made by God. Simply the stuff we are made of and good for its purpose. Sin is transgression of law and emphatically not a constituent of flesh.

The Bereans would do well to put less untruths about others on their website and concentrate on reading accurately and with discernment the writings they so cavalierly misquote, in an attempt to misrepresent the views of a noble man long dead.

Sister Helen Brady

Romans 3:32 – “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.”

We received an e-mail from Brother Paul Pells regarding the above. He writes:-

“I have to point out F.C.Maycock’s use of Romans 11:32 on page 11 of “Life By Law and by Grace” is wrong because the translation is wrong and therefore his logic here must also be wrong. The scripture hasn’t concluded all under sin as he quotes (without perhaps checking the Greek?). It locks up (concludes)

the all in not under (*en* not *hupo*) “un-persuadable-ness” - *apeitheia* not *armartia*, which is not the same and that scripture needs to be explained otherwise.

Kind Regards, Paul”

We thank Paul his e-mail. I agree that the translation as we have it in the King James version is not particularly good, but I still believe it has not been misused by F.C.Maycock. I don’t see that the argument constructed in his booklet, “Life By Law and By Grace” is in anyway misleading. I have looked up the following translations and cannot come to any other conclusions than the one suggested by the writer: that we are all enclosed in or under sin for the purpose of God’s blessing of redemption from that sin.

These are translated as follows -

- 1). Emphatic Diaglott- “For God shut up together all for disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.”
- 2). Nestle-Marshall - “For God hath consigned all men to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.”
- 3). Concordant. - “For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that he might be merciful to all.”

If we take Romans 3:9,19 and Galatians 3:22 into account also, I cannot see how any other argument can be made of them. If, however, Paul, you feel some other meaning is meant, perhaps you would enlarge on your thoughts.

Russell.

EQUAL THOUGH DIFFERENT

This paper is intended to draw attention to the fact that God regards men and women as equals. There are of course differences, delightful differences between the two sexes; tone of voice, dress, etc. Men generally dress in sombre colours, but women choose a variety of colours and dress more decoratively. Such differences are pleasing. It is a sad mistake to aim for similarity in dress, or in other ways, by either sex. It was surely a delightful thought of God to endow the two sexes with different ways, different temperaments. But at the very start He showed that He regards men and women as equal before Him.

Both were made in the Image of God “...in the image of God... male and female created He them,” (Genesis 1:27), and from that time He has shown no favouritism for man or woman. “Are not My ways equal?” said God. It is our ways that are not equal.

The idea that because the woman was provided as a help for man, she is therefore inferior, has no support in Scripture. The word ‘help’ used of the woman in Genesis is also used for help from God, in many passages. Also, the woman was not given to the man as a possession, but given to be with him, to use Adam’s own words. God ‘brought her to the man,’ He did not give her to him. God’s ways are indeed equal. What He demands from man He demands also from woman.

The Ten Commandments.

When God spoke these commandments, He spoke to every individual man and woman in the assembly, when He used the word ‘thou.’ He did not regard the man as the ‘head’ of his wife, or He would have added ‘nor thy wife’ to the law concerning the Sabbath, (Exodus 20.10) ‘But the seventh day is the sabbath’ of the Lord thy God: in it thou shall not do any work, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.”

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| Lepers. | There was one law for both men and women. |
| Nazarites. | The same laws governed both men and women. |
| Sacrifices. | Men and women were required to offer sacrifices and the same laws applied. |
| Tabernacle. | Women gave both materials and services, like the men, in its construction. |

Firstborn. The firstborn in Egypt was slain, whether male or female; and the firstborn of Israel, male or female, were claimed by God to minister to Him in the Tabernacle. These firstborn men and women were afterwards exchanged for the whole tribe of Levi, both men and women. (See “The Ministry of Women in Tabernacle and Temple”).

Prophets. God had His prophets and also His prophetesses in olden times, and in the more recent New Testament times. He spoke in prophecy through both men and women.

Visits. God appeared, by His representatives, to Abraham and other men. He also appeared to women, such as the mother of Samson.

Visions. God-given visions are called ‘revelations’ in the New Testament. These were given to women as well as to men. When such a vision was given Paul asked the rest of the assembly to keep silent while the recipient of the revelation spoke. (I Corinthians 14:26ff).

Foods. Some foods, such as the Shewbread, were called most holy. None but the Priests, and their wives and children, were allowed to eat of them.

Repentance, Belief in the Gospel, Baptism. Women, as well as men are required to repent, believe the Gospel and be baptised,

Breaking of Bread. All partake similarly.

Holy Spirit Baptism. God made no distinction between men and women in the granting of the gift of the Spirit. Also He gave various Spirit gifts to men and women alike. In these days, also God grants the Holy Spirit to those who believe and ask, whether men or women.

Prayer. God hears and answers prayer from both men and women.

Character. The same development of character is required from men and women. (If women are required to have a meek and quiet spirit, men are told to be ‘unstained with anger and strife.’ What is the difference? (Weymouth’s translation). Submission one to another is enjoined upon all. (Ephesians 5:21).

The Prize. The same Crown of Life is promised to all, both men and women.

So we see that God’s ways are indeed equal; but not those of the various churches and sects who discriminate between men and women, forbidding women to take part in the .services or church organisation as men do. Also, the requirement that women must wear on their heads some token of their inferior status before God, is contrary to God’s way. Such churches are following the teaching of Judaisers, taken from the traditions of the Jewish Elders, known to-day as The Talmud. They fail to distinguish between words of Paul himself, and the words of Judaisers from whose letter Paul quotes. (See the article “Silence”).

A.H.Broughton and Mary Thomas.