

Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), a German philosopher and mathematician and a contemporary of Isaac Newton, wrote the following propounding his doctrine of optimism:

“The world we lived in was the best of all possible worlds, and we must make the best of it and improve it rather than bemoan and reject it.”

He based his argument on the trilemma: if this world is not the best possible, God must either not have known how to make it better, or not have been able, or not have chosen to do so. The first contradicted his omniscience, the second his omnipotence, the third his benevolence.

QED: be grateful.

Recently, while looking through some old papers given to me some 18 years ago by the late Brother Harvey and Sister Evelyn Linggood, I came across a folder marked “items for publication.” So far as I can see it was never published – an article written by our late Brother Ernest Brady. Sister Helen Brady believes her father may have written this in about 1960 or 1961.

“TWENTY-TWO QUESTIONS”

In the pamphlet “Outrage on Justice”, we included a series of questions addressed to us by a Christadelphian, Mr. R. Storer of Mountsorrel and our answers thereto. We have now received via Bro. Hallam a letter by way of rejoinder. He says he would like to reply very fully but other Christian duties are equally vital and he is therefore not able to give the pamphlet “the detailed consideration and very considerable treatment it requires.”

We should not have thought there was any Christian duty more vital in the mind of a Christadelphian than the defence of his faith and the elucidation of the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, though even so long ago as when we were member’s of that community we had become conscious of the fact that the advancement of what we may term the organisational or social side of the community and the preservation of unity was already overshadowing in some degree the doctrinal and spiritual side, and things we see and hear suggest that this process has gathered speed and force. Increasingly it is clear that a Christadelphian may believe and say - pretty much what he pleases so long as he does not make himself objectionable or cause any dissention. So although R. Storer is unable to give us the full benefit of the detailed consideration he thinks we deserve, we are at any rate pleased to find one who can still put pen to paper in a discussion of the things which once were deemed so enthralling that even the angels desired to look into them. The fact that most Christadelphians now prefer to ignore the subject is an indication of the sorry state into which they have fallen.

On the subject of the pamphlet in general, Mr. Storer says: “As regards John Carter and W.F.Barling, I have, of course, realized that they were in difficulties... but it is for them to answer their own difficulties.”

This is not a very sound position for a man in Mr. Storeys place to take up. Both the men mentioned are Christadelphians and both claim to be representing the Christadelphian Community and correctly defining their faith as based on the Statement of Faith. If Mr. Storer recognises that they are in difficulties, it is his responsibility as much as theirs, for he is a Christadelphian and it is his faith which has been brought into disrepute by their contradictory teaching. In view of the amount he has, himself, written on the subject, both to us and his own brethren, in his questions and his rejoinder, we should have thought that he would feel obliged in simple honesty to say either, “I think John Carter is wrong” or “I think Fred Barling is wrong” or he might even say, “I think they are both wrong”, for he admits they cannot both be right, otherwise they would not be in difficulties. But to shrug the matter off by saying let them answer for their own difficulties does not appear to us to be ordinary intellectual honesty.

The truth of the matter may, of course, be that he simply does not know or cannot decide, and if he said only this one could respect him, though we should then want some explanation of the self-confidence with which he criticises us.

He writes, "It is the 'Rational faith without a Creed' that I reject almost totally - particularly (2) which I almost reject line by line as an explanation of the atonement." He is, of course, perfectly entitled to reject our Rational faith, but we feel bound to remark that in the absence of any coherent explanation of his own, combined with his admission of the difficulties into which two Christadelphians of repute have tumbled by offering theirs, we are not seriously disturbed by his threatened line by line rejection of ours. If he had devoted himself to giving a line by line reason for his almost total rejection, we could have dealt with it, but his other Christian duties preventing we can only look at some of the points he has raised. We say, "Some of" because we find a good deal of his writing lacking in coherence and some of his points so obscure as to be - to us - meaningless. For example, referring to the crucifixion, he says:-

"The phrase in A.D.Norris's book, 'The Devil hung there dead.' It could only be true if you added that when Joseph took down the body of Jesus - which John calls Jesus - we add 'and the devil still hung there dead.' At death there was a separation between the devil and the body of Jesus - so that the devil was not taken down in one sense. If, however, the emphasis is on the burial as the end of death, then the entombment is both part of the act, it is a sphere of dominion thought to belong to death and sin, but by the further addition 'was buried' links it in analogy with the putting of the hostile powers in the cave of destruction."

If there is any coherence or logical thought in this extract, it is quite beyond this writer's power to say what it is. He seems to have in his mind some sort of idea of a dual nature - more like the Church idea of "a soul" investing the body. He seems to be saying that although the Apostle tells us that Jesus was taken down from the Cross and laid in the tomb, something - the devil - remained on the Cross. What was it? He does not tell us - if he knows. What are we to understand by "separation between the devil and the body of Jesus"? What is "the sphere of dominion thought to belong to death and sin"? What are "the hostile powers put in the cave of destruction"? What has burial to do with the matter at all? A man does not have to be buried to prove he is dead. This seems to us to be a brand new kind of theology - a mixture of spiritualism and ju-ju. It beats us entirely. In some respects Mr. Storey's "explanation" of A. D. Norris is worse than A. D. Norris himself and that is saying something!

All this incomprehensible nonsense arises from the Christadelphian doctrine of sin-in-the-flesh, and the violence of their reaction to our work is sufficient evidence that many of them realise that they are on the wrong side of the fence. This man appears to us to be a first-class example of one who, having wilfully closed his eyes to the truth is rapidly becoming incapable of distinguishing between sense and nonsense. "From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that he hath."

One is loath to question the mental honesty of an opponent but it is difficult to account otherwise for some of the things he says. As a further example, one of the important facts concerning Jesus is that as the Son of God he was free - see Matthew 17:26 and John 8:36. These passages only refer incidentally to the fact - the proof of it is the circumstance of his birth. On this point Mr. Storer writes :-

"It is to be noted that so far from expressing the freedom of the Son, the scriptures stress the acceptance of the form of a slave - Philippians 2:8, but of course not enslavement. I am not saying there was not a freedom of the Son - what I am pointing out is that the freedom consisted in the acceptance of the slavery as a thing experienced."

Now, he says, the scriptures are far from expressing the freedom of the Son. Very well then - if the scriptures are far from saying it, he ought not to say it either. But on the contrary he admits that the Son was free. Either he is wrong in saying what scripture says or he is wrong in what he says. The fact of the matter is that he knows as well as we do that the scriptures do say that Jesus was free, but in order to uphold a false theory he finds a way both to admit it - since he professes to believe the Bible - and at the same time deny it - since he is a Christadelphian. He must have it both ways at once - Jesus both free and not free - black must be white and the scriptures must contradict themselves in order that Christadelphianism can be proved true.

There may be some people simple enough to be misled by such transparent double talk but we think that those who stoop to using it are their own accusers.

Another striking example of what appears to be nothing less than a deliberate falsification of fact. He takes exception to our statement (p. 26), "As a child of Mary he was a man of flesh and blood related to the race and of exactly the same corruptible nature, but as Son of God his life came to him direct from the Source." He objects to our view that as the Only-begotten Son of God, Jesus was by right of birth, not only a free man but the heir apparent of the Lord of Creation. He wishes to restrict his inheritance to what he would be entitled to as Mary's son - i.e. human nature, Jewishness and "Adamic involvement in penal condemnation," and in order to do so he writes :-

"Actually this (our view) is quite contrary to Jewish law, which inherits by the mother - see daughters of Zelophehad. The children of women stand in the constitutional status of his forbears."

Every Bible reader knows, or ought to know, that the case of the daughters of Zelophehad is the exception which proves the rule. So far from it proving that a child normally inherits through its mother, it proves the contrary - that only where there was no son through whom the inheritance could pass then the issue of daughters maintained the line. Here are the relevant texts, Numbers 27-

Verse 4 - "Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he hath no son?"

Verse 8 - "If a man die and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance pass unto his daughter."

It is a very disreputable sort of theory which thus requires to take hold of a scriptural fact and apply it to prove the reverse of what it in fact does. It was precisely because under the Jewish law name, tribe and inheritance stood in the male line that this exception was made in the case of Zelophehad and his issue and because he had no son, his land and possessions passed through his daughters. So that the attempt to prove that Jesus inherited through Mary a legacy from Adam of sin, sinful flesh, condemnation and death, fails on the false evidence produced. Jesus was the Son of God and therefore his name, status and inheritance was that of a Prince.

"When He bringeth the first begotten into the world, He said, And let all the angels of God worship Him,"

If it was necessary in the Divine plan of Redemption for Jesus to inherit from Adam, then Joseph should have been his father. It is agreed - at least Christadelphians profess to agree - that in such a case his nature would have been no different from what it was. Why then was he the Son of God? They - Christadelphians - reply, "In order to give him the power to overcome the sinful tendencies of his defiled nature" - and, of course, thereby they do the very thing they falsely charge upon us - make Jesus different from us - a mixture of human and divine. We of the Nazarene Fellowship answer:- "He was the Son of God in order that he might have the legal freedom which would enable him by sacrificing himself to give his life for the life of the world."

Mr. Storer tells us we are obviously in the dark about sacrifice. He says the coats of skins have quite another symbolism than that we suggest, namely, the covering or forgiveness of sins by faith in a sacrificial offering. He does not reveal what this other symbolism is, but he goes on to say there is no case in the Old Testament of a recognition of life as forfeited, and he says,

"I repeat, I defy you to produce one."

Very well, here are two:-

In the first the principle is established that life can be forfeited and subsequently redeemed. Exodus 21:30 - "If there be laid on a man a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatever is laid upon him."

If a man could ransom his life by the payment of a sum of money, is not this a recognition of the fact that life can be forfeited ?

In the second the fact is established that the life of every man is forfeit. Exodus 30:12 - "when thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord."

Why had every soul to be thus redeemed with a half-shekel payment on pain of death?

These are plain statements but the fact and the principle of forfeiture of life by sin was shown by every sin-offering from Eden onwards throughout the life of the nation of Israel and most particularly upon every day of Atonement. Anyone who requires more of a "thus saith the Lord" than this is just wilfully blind.

Finally, he pays us a somewhat doubtful compliment in the words,

"It has been well said that where definitions appear clear, concise and simple, they are necessarily superficial in this matter."

This at least is a change from the charge usually made against us by Christadelphians, that we are too deep, involved and argumentative. At any rate, if we have succeeded in presenting our views of the Atonement clearly, concisely and simply in our Rational Faith without a Creed, it is more than Christadelphians have managed to do in over a century.

He continues, however, -

"Now one of your weak spots is the solidarity of the human make-up, whereby the action of any part affects the whole. Your separation (he goes on) of mind and body, so that one can be subject to evil inclination and the body immune is a false-think -- it is not true of the Bible doctrine of man or of the psychology of man."

There is either some confusion here or it is double-talk again. How it is possible for him to find us guilty of believing in "the solidarity of the human make-up" - by which we take him to mean we believe a person is a whole unified being, which is our belief, but at the same time in "the separation of mind and body," is a puzzle. We do not believe in the possibility of separating the mind and the body (except, of course, at death - though even then it is not a question of "separation". When life is taken, a corpse remains and the mind, which only existed or can exist in a body invested with life, ceases to be). We have not much use for psychology and believe a large part of it is bunk, but we do know what is the Bible's teaching concerning man and believe it is epitomised in God's words through Moses to Israel (Deuteronomy 30:19), "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Moses said nothing about their minds being capable but their bodies incapable, of obeying God. They were addressed as if they were whole persons, with minds capable of responding and ordering their lives - of making a choice between alternatives, and it is our belief that this choice faced Adam, faced Jesus and faces us. And this brings us again to his challenge to produce one proof from the Old Testament that life was forfeited. Here is yet another - did Israel choose life and blessing? The record shows they chose cursing and death. Was not their life then forfeit? And as to who in fact is guilty of what he calls false-think, so that one can be "subject to evil inclination and the body immune," just read again what is quoted above of his description of Jesus - the separation between the devil and the body of Jesus.

As a last example of what we can only regard as a first-class example of the foolishness of the wise, just consider this. Mr. Storer writes :

“You have already quite correctly attached to Adam’s natural estate the quite natural death.”

This is a very important admission for a Christadelphian to make, for it is absolutely contrary to their teaching that natural death came by sin but that is not the chief point here.

R.Storer continues: “This makes for a necessity to say what life was lost or forfeited. As I see it, it amounts to the difference between the 900 odd years Adam lived and the years he would have lived. And it would seem to follow Jesus gave the years from say 33 to 70 or 80 that he might have lived. It is to such invalid reckonings that this substitution theory leads and from which Christadelphians, who may be quite limited in understanding, quite rightly recoil.”

No, friend, the true substitution theory does not lead to such reckonings; these are your own calculations, and if this is indeed how you see it, we are not surprised that you have a somewhat limited appreciation of what salvation means. Without following you into a foolish speculation as to how many more years than 900 Adam might have lived and setting against them the years to which Jesus might have attained had he not been crucified, we will merely point out that it is not years of life, more or less, which was incurred by sin - but death, execution. Nor was it by the loss of a few years of earthly existence that Jesus redeemed us, but by the suffering of death. A truly enlightened mind would realise that Jesus, as the Son of God, was entitled as of right (John 10:18, 12:23,34) to everlasting life without experiencing death. In Adam’s case, we do not need to ask what life he lost or forfeited - it was his life - the only life he had - “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Did he sin? Yes. Did he die? Not on the day he sinned, in accordance with the threat, nor for 900 years more, so it is more sensible to ask, not how many more years he might have lived but why he was allowed to live at all. And the answer to this is the answer to the problem which neither Christadelphians nor any other sect have been able to answer – because in His mercy God allowed His own Son to take Adam’s place and voluntarily suffer in his stead the death he had incurred. If Adam had suffered it he would have perished and we would never have existed. Jesus could suffer it and not perish because he was free from the condemnation which Adam incurred for all his descendants and free from personal sin which would have reduced him to a similar position.

We are glad Mr. Storer can admit at least that our theory of salvation has a semblance of reality and even though he regrets it, and even though Christadelphians of limited understanding recoil from it, we are satisfied that it is the true apostolic gospel and that the chief reason it is rejected is the same as caused Christ’s own people to reject him - stiff necked pride in their own way and organization, and wilful refusal to see what is plain and obvious. It should be no surprise to us to see this happening to-day; if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub how much more they of his household. If they rejected and resisted the teaching of the Saviour himself, who could set the seal of truth upon his words by such works as never man did, it is no marvel that 1,900 years later their counterparts can pour scorn upon the feeble efforts we can make.

Brother Ernest Brady

Letter from Brother Phil Parry to a friend:-

In a letter to me a friend quoted: - “As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

My questions on this is that if all ‘in Adam,’ when they die, what death do they experience and how have they become in the position of being ‘in Adam’? Is it through a physical condition or through a legal position?

If St Paul refers to it as a physical position by inheritance, then death would be by that means – leaving it impossible to be introduced into Christ, for this introduction into Christ is impossible through inheritance or descent.

Is it not then evident from the words of Jesus that to be in Him one has to pass from death to life? From what kind of death are they made alive by being 'in Christ' and through what conditions? The answer is in the words of Jesus and St Paul. No physical death nor physical resurrection involved here for the faithful. Jesus said, in John 5:22-24, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word (the Father's word) and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

On the road to Damascus, Saul was 'in Adam' and it demanded a great light to enlighten him to his position of being under the Edenic Law of Sin and Death – a legal position from which only the death Jesus had suffered could make him free. He died that death in symbol by baptism of water and Spirit, and could say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain." (Galatians 2:20,21).

What I learn here from Paul's teaching is that it is all related to Law and that man's corruptible nature has nothing to do with the Death by Sin which Adam incurred as a legal sentence in the taking away of life in the blood. I have learned from Paul to the Romans that by the offence of one many be dead by legal imputation of God not willingly, but the all 'in Adam' by enlightenment die in the manner of symbolic death into that of Christ and are made alive in the likeness of His resurrection. It is an active demonstration of faith and understanding of the reason for the voluntary sacrifice of Christ, that the world through Him might be saved.

Thus far I have dealt with Paul's teaching on the Federal position of being 'in Adam' by enlightenment, and becoming 'in Christ' through knowledge, belief and faith in His atoning blood, baptised into His death, a dying unto Adamic Sin of the world, and walking in newness of life – a new man and a servant of God on probation.

Again, my friend wrote, "No man can serve two masters." True. And therefore no man can be 'in Adam' and 'in Christ' at the same time.

"Who shall deliver me from this wretched position?" asks Paul of his former state in Adam. "I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ, so with the mind (of the Spirit) I myself serve the law of God, but with the (mind of the) flesh (unregenerated-the old man), the law of Sin." For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of Sin and Death." "I am now the servant of righteousness." True.

John 17:1-3, "These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Anointed whom thou hast sent." Note this, Jesus was not sent on His mission until His authorised word from God and His Anointing in Jordan. Jesus also said, "And no man hath ascended into heaven save he that came down from heaven even the Son of man which is in heaven (or, the heavenlies)." I myself believe that as Moses ascended into the mount of God and received the Tables of Stone, later described by St Paul as the ministration of death, so Jesus ascended into heaven to receive from his Father the ministration of Life – Grace and Truth.

We return now to St. Paul, no longer Saul of Tarsus 'in Adam' but now 'in Christ' having died unto sin and now in the likeness of Christ's resurrection. Not the power (incorruptible) as described by Paul in his epistle to Philippians chapter 3. He recalls his previous state under the law – verse 6, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him..." having the righteousness "which is of God by faith:

that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” who die in the Lord.

This is what Paul describes in Thessalonians and Corinthians a bodily incorruptible resurrection at the second coming of Christ of those, who, like St Paul, have fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. This was the attainment laid upon Paul as the great Apostle to the Jews and especially to the gentiles in the Name of Christ.

No one needs to attain to a resurrection of standing before a judgment seat of Christ identical to an assize court of law. The community with which I am familiar teach such a resurrection on the grounds of responsibility and works, good or bad.

Paul is not boasting but says “Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching for unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be of the faith which cometh by love, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless whereto` we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” Amen

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power.”

P.Parry (Nazarene)

Baptism and The Federal Principle

Dr. John Thomas wrote in Elpis Israel on page 132 (14th edition):

“As the constitution of sin hath its roots in the disobedience of the first Adam, so also hath the constitution of righteousness root in the obedience of the second Adam. Hence the apostle says, “As through one offence (sentence was pronounced) upon all men unto condemnation; so also through the righteousness (sentence was pronounced) upon all men (that is Jews and Gentiles) unto a justification of life. For as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners: so also through the obedience of the one the many shall be constituted righteous.”

“The two Adams are two federal chiefs the first being figurative of the second in these relations. All sinners are in the first Adam; and all the righteous in the second, only on a different principle. Sinners were in the loins of the first when he transgressed; but not in the loins of the latter when he was obedient unto death; therefore the flesh profiteth nothing. For sons of Adam to become Sons of God they must be subjects of an adoption which is only attainable by some divinely appointed means.”

It is plain that the most important aspect of baptism has been lost to many within the Christadelphian community and the most commonly held view among them seems to be that baptism into Jesus is for the forgiveness of sins. In “Reading the Bible Effectively” we are told that baptism is “burial in water” and quotes from Romans 6 – “Buried with him (Jesus) by baptism into death.” We are further told that “Baptism also represents the putting to death and burial of the old way of life, and a rising up again to a new life, centred upon Jesus. But in the summing up of this section all we read is that Baptism is:- “essential for salvation;” “involves mature responsible adults;” “must be preceded by belief of the Gospel;” “involves total immersion in water;” it “washes away our sins” and “is how we become Abraham’s seed and heirs of the promises.”

Regarding John the Baptist, we read in Mathew 3:5,6 “Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judaea... and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” and in Mark 1:4 we find that “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” If John’s baptism was for the forgiveness of sins then why another baptism? Why a baptism into Christ? We know there were some who, having been baptised by John were later baptised into Jesus Christ by the Apostles. Why then was not John’s baptism sufficient seeing it was for the forgiveness of sins? What more was necessary? Besides, why was Jesus baptised by John, a man who had no sins to confess?

But before we go any further, it is perhaps necessary that we explain what we mean by the Federal Principle. Of course, this term does not appear in Scripture though the principle is explained by Paul in Romans 5 to 7. The Federal Principle has to do with Law and applies only in the legal and doctrinal sphere; it determines whether a man is in Adam or in Christ and has nothing to do with nature, heredity, or the physical Law of reproduction, and while it is over all mankind, it is not operative on all.

In the simplest terms it is expressed as a coming out of Adam and into Christ.

The one sin of Adam introduced this Law of The Sin and The Death and it becomes operative upon all those who are responsible by reason of enlightenment. If a child dies, it is the result of natural causes or misfortune, and not because of Adam’s sin nor because of the federal principle, since where there is no Law there is no transgression and sin is not imputed (John 15:22). The gospel is concerned with people who have attained to years of discretion and reason, and once the Law is known, a person is responsible and comes under the Law of sin and death.

This coming out of Adam and passing into Jesus Christ can be understood in much the same way as when one would choose to leave the country of ones birth to become a citizen of another country of ones choice. Such a move involves a change of allegiance for Adam and Jesus are the two Federal Heads. Either we can, according to Scripture, be in Adam or in Christ, but we cannot be in both at the same time. We can pay allegiance to only one. No man can serve two masters. This change of allegiance is the primary purpose of baptism while the forgiveness of sins from this time onwards keeps the disciple of Jesus free from loosing his place in the Kingdom to come.

The application and the importance of this Federal Principle can be seen from the fact that by repentance and obedience, men are removed from the Federal Condemnation in Adam into the Federal Redemption in Christ, and after baptism, as a symbolic suffering of The Death, they are no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1) or in bondage, but free (John 8:36) and uncondemned, and able to rejoice in the certainty of their salvation if they endure faithfully (John 5:24). Christadelphians ignore the legal of the Federal Principle, and make it the basis of the sinful flesh heresy, applying it to the physical state of corruptibility, which includes responsible and irresponsible alike.

So we see that by one man, Adam, sin entered into the world and with that sin came judicial death for sin. (Natural death is not the result of sin; it was part of God’s “very good” creation from, the beginning). Since that time, all those who are enlightened are considered to be in Adam and under condemnation, not as a curse; not as a misfortune; not as a punishment, but for the purpose of a blessing. Certainly, scripture calls it a condemnation and we can see it as an alienation from our Creator, but the blessing is that this condemnation, this alienation, can be lifted so that there is now no condemnation – see Romans 8:1 - and no alienation for those in Christ Jesus.

Jesus was appointed of God to be the perfect antitypical offering - the substance to the various shadow offerings under the Law described throughout the Old Testament. A Lamb without spot or blemish. “For this cause came I into the world and for this cause was I born.” “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” - John 1:29. John says, “in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). Peter says, “He did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22). Paul says “He knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The writer to the Hebrews says, “He was apart from sin.” In short, Jesus was that Holy thing born of the Virgin Mary to be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Because of His Paternity He was empowered to do for us that which we, because of our paternity, were without power to do for ourselves - that was, to reconcile us to God. Romans 5:6,10, “For if

when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

This was foretold in Psalm 80:17, “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself” and confirmed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” So we see Jesus Christ dying the judicial death, the death for sin, “the Just for the unjust that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

With his death Jesus paid the price of the wages of sin for us. Romans 6:10, “For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” For had He not died so that by the grace of God we might share in that death unto sin through the symbolism of baptism, then we would have to die the judicial death for ourselves. Hebrews 2:9, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” 2 Corinthians 5:14,15, “For the love of God constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead.”

The fundamental difference between receiving the reward of either life or death forms the basis of and the justification for the two sovereign Laws under which mankind live out their responsibility to their Creator.

- 1) The Law of Sin and Death defines the condemnation of Romans 5.
- 2) The Law of the Spirit of Life in Jesus Christ defines the justification of Romans 5.

While this is quite straightforward, there are those who cling to the misconception which make this Federal Principle of non effect - the premise that Adam introduced physical corruptibility into the world at the fall; which cursed condition, some say, remains with all mankind and can only be altered for those in Christ after they have successfully passed the Judgment Seat at Christ’s return. But the teaching that mankind is under physical condemnation since the time of Adam has its foundation in the man-made Roman Catholic doctrine of Original Sin. It is not found in Scripture and its main support has always been the mistranslation and consequent misunderstanding of Romans 8:3. “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” But nowhere in Scripture are we told that the flesh is full of sin. The physical flesh is not sinful; it is not full of sin. It is not correct to say that flesh is sinful. People are sinful, not their flesh. If Mr Green, the farmer had a herd of cows, would you refer to them a Green’s cows? Or would you refer to them as green cows? Yet this is the error the translators have made in this verse. Why? Perhaps because they wanted to uphold their doctrine of Original Sin! There seems no other explanation for this error, or false translation. Oh, the harm this has caused!

Romans 8:3 should read that Jesus was sent in the likeness of sin’s flesh, i.e. flesh belonging to Sin as a master. This verse tells us that Jesus did not belong to Sin as a master, which we know to be true, for Jesus belonged to God and was never alienated from Him by being under the same condemnation as Adam or those in Adam. Jesus was never in Adam but as the second ‘Adam’ He was the Federal Head of those who are His.

If sin in the flesh was the condemnation then how could Jesus say, “Except I had come and spoken unto them they had not had sin. But now they say, we see; therefore their sin remaineth.” Again, supposing the condemnation was physical, then the coming of Jesus and the light He brought into the world would not remove it. And again, if the condemnation was physical then the coming out of Adam and into Christ has no real purpose and all that is accomplished by baptism into Christ is the washing away of past sins.

However, Jesus said “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light.” Paul, in support of Jesus’ teaching, defines this condemnation as a legal enactment that was passed upon the human race.

A point to notice is that this condemnation does not become operative until people are given the choice. Those amenable to this condemnation are those who love darkness rather than light. Those who love light

rather than darkness come out of Adam by being baptised into Jesus Christ, that is, they are baptised into His death; they are no longer under condemnation, no longer sold under sin, for the faithful are now freed from sin as their master who are in Christ and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1). They have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Jesus.

Let's ask and answer the question, What life did Jesus sacrifice to buy back and so reconcile us to God? It is Jesus who supplies us with the answer - John 10:11-17, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life (*psuche*) for the sheep." It has been said that if Jesus paid the debt owing by man (judicial death) - Matthew 18:27:- "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him and forgave the debt" - then He could not rise again without destroying the analogy. But Jesus rose in all the fullness of His *zoe* life, leaving the remnants of His *psuche* life in the tomb - "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life (*zoe*)" (Romans 6:4).

God gave His only begotten Son. His Son gave His life to pay the debt owed to the Law. Adam owed one life to the Law. Jesus paid one life to the Law. All except the Son of God have received life from Adam and are "in Adam" until they choose to be "in Christ" by baptism into Him, that is, into His death.

As another writer has explained it: "God provided in His Son, the one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin and purchased back to Himself all those who, alienated from Him by sin put on the name of Christ by faith. Jesus, the heir to all creation and the perfect example of man made in the Divine image, in carrying out His Father's plan of salvation by laying down His life as our substitute, upheld supreme Law by meeting its claim and at the same time revealed the love and mercy that initiated it. To believe these things and to be immersed as a symbolic passing through the death which Jesus suffered for us literally is Christian baptism and is the condition of forgiveness of sins and the gift of everlasting life."

Brother Russell Gregory

The article here reproduced is with the permission of its author, Brother Cyril Marsters and of the Editor, Brother Les Body, of the Endeavour Magazine in which it first appeared in December 2005. It was written in response to "Sin in the Flesh – Its Cause and Cure" produced and distributed on behalf of the "Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee," a copy of which we published in our last Circular Letter.

Sin in the Flesh

A secondary Biblical usage of the word Sin?

An eight-page booklet, on the subject SIN IN THE FLESH - ITS CAUSE AND CURE, has recently been circulated by the Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee. Previous publications of this Committee have shown that they regard themselves as final arbiters on correct belief; the present booklet is no exception and calls, I feel, for some response. The Foreword (p.3) declares:

. . . the wrong teaching on this subject has intensified and grown extensively in its influence, sowing discord within the brotherhood. For example there has recently been correspondence in The Endeavour magazine illustrating a failure to understand the scriptural principles involved.

The purpose of the current booklet is to insist on the Committee's particular and very specific understanding of Sin - and its corollary, the belief that Jesus had to offer for himself in order to be cleansed from his own sinful flesh. The Foreword states;

The principal cause of this wrong understanding of the subject--is a failure to properly comprehend the **origin of sin in the flesh** [my emphasis]. We are all very familiar with - the

early chapters of Genesis, but very often the full significance of that record is misunderstood. In this booklet therefore, we will begin by looking at the record of the fall of man and its consequences in a little detail.

The booklet suggests that we put ourselves in the place of a person who has no knowledge whatsoever of the contents of the Bible. It then spells out for us (pp. 4 & 5) just what this person's understanding and conclusions would be, after he had read the first 3 chapters of Genesis. Let us consider the Committee's conclusions, as seen through the eyes of this imaginary reader - who we will call Tom. At the same time, bear in mind that the whole of the booklet's remaining arguments depend absolutely on what Tom has deduced from his reading of Gen 1 to 3. Below, numbered for convenience, is my summary of the various points made, with Tom's thoughts and conclusions given in italics.

Results of Tom's reading

1. From chapter 1 he learned that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, that he made man in his own image, and that he saw that everything he had made was very good. From this Tom concludes that: as yet evil, including the propensity within man to do that which is wrong, did not exist.
2. In the next chapter he read the more detailed account of the forming of man and woman; also that they were forbidden to eat of the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil' Chapter 3 had told him of the suggestions put to the woman by the serpent, which resulted in first her, then the man, disobeying God's commandment. In consequence 'the eyes of them both were opened; and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.' *So obviously, Tom reasoned, they were now ashamed of their nakedness. But why? After all, husbands and wives are not normally embarrassed at seeing one another's nakedness, and there was no one else to see them. Also, when God had spoken to Adam, he had replied: 'I was afraid, because I was naked.'* So, *disobeying God had brought both shame and fear.*
3. Following his above thoughts on the couple's embarrassment, Tom went on to decide: *Obviously the 'very good' state at the end of the sixth day no longer applied to the bodies of the man and the woman. Those propensities to disobedience, which the serpent had introduced to them, were now a part of their physical being. Their bodies, alone amongst all that God had created, were present in a 'not good' state. This was their first knowledge of evil.*
4. A thought occurred to Tom: *The clothing which they made for themselves was rather scanty. It did not cover the parts of their bodies that had sinned, i.e. their ears, eyes, hands and mouths. What they covered was their shame and fear. They had already been told to be fruitful and multiply, so they would have realised that the evil state of their bodies would be transmitted to their children.*
5. Our reader then proceeds to learn of the further consequences of their disobedience. *The woman would suffer in childbirth, the whole creation was cursed, and the man and woman were sentenced to death. They would not die immediately, but their life would be one of toil and labour.*
6. *Yet there was a hint of hope. A seed of the woman was promised who would eventually destroy the seed of the serpent which was the cause of their unclean bodies (Job 14:4). Also God provided them more adequate clothing which would cover their whole bodies... But this clothing obviously required the death of an animal.*
7. 'Our reader' says the Committee, 'would then understand the following principles':
 1. *God created a world that was very good.*
 2. *That very good state was marred by disobedience, with the following consequences:*
 - i) *Man now possessed in his physical body, the propensity to act in a way contrary to God's will, which would be inherited by all his descendants.*
 - ii) *Man became mortal*
 - iii) *The whole of creation was cursed,*

iv) *God provided a covering for man's body by a coat of skin which required the death of an animal.*

At this point, as Tom has come to the Committee's own, *correct*, understanding of the subject, they now take their leave of him in order to 'apply these fundamental principles,..' in their remaining pages. However, for the moment, let us stay with Tom.

Tom requests a Second Opinion.

Tom, realising that the Committee had had a large input in steering him towards reaching the above understanding, began to wonder whether he had been unduly influenced. He asked himself whether he had reached sound conclusions; or, could there be other ways of understanding the subject? He decided to ask for the opinion of his friend Dick. So, Dick, having listened to Tom's interpretation of Genesis chapters 1 to 3, agreed to read the chapters himself and to come back to Tom with his own impressions of their meaning.

Dick's Report to Tom after reading Gen. 1 to 3.

Genesis depicts God as the Creator and Sustainer of the earth and everything upon it. Obviously, from our current knowledge, the *seven days* of creation are not intended to be taken literally. God created all the various living creatures of sea, sky and earth; finally making man and woman in his own image. They were all instructed to 'be fruitful and multiply'. Suitable provision of food for all these living creatures was made by way of creating the many and varied herbs and trees, all bearing their own seed for future renewal and replenishment. God is seen as the originator of all the great and continuing cycle of nature that we see around us. Everything he had made was very good.

Coming to chapters 2 and 3, Tom, it is clear to me that not everything therein is to be taken quite as literally as you appear to have understood it. These chapters, it seems to me, are clearly in the form of a *parable*. Although in chapter 1, men and women had been given a higher status, i.e. dominion over the other creatures, the picture given in chapter 2, of the formation of a human being from the dust of the ground, makes clear that humans, like the beasts, are of the earth. 'Adam', my concordance tells me, means *of the ground*.

A delightful picture in chapter 2 - again reading it as a parable - is that of the human couple being nurtured in a special garden, planted by God himself. 'Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden,...' A positive picture indeed: no weeds to make life difficult, only those plants which were pleasing and useful, all of which - except for one single tree - were freely available for the taking. A measure of responsibility was given, to till and keep the garden, hardly an onerous task in the circumstances, overall, a life of delight and happiness. Also we see the tree of life, available in the midst of the garden, a figurative picture of the Creator's ongoing provision of life for his creatures.

Chapter 3 opens with the picture of the evil, cunning serpent, who suggests to the woman that the warning the couple had received - that to eat of the tree of knowledge would result in death - was not true. It is from hereon, Tom, that I particularly fall out with your excessively literal interpretations and unwarranted assumptions. Are we to understand that a seemingly magical serpent was able to thwart God's intentions in the ways that you suggest? If we accept from chapter 1 that the whole of God's creation was *very good*, then who created a literal, evil, beast such as this?

Prior to this juncture in the story, God had given the couple an idyllic life in a beautiful garden of His own planting, and provided them with all they needed to sustain that life. But the thought came to them, that by eating of the one forbidden fruit, they could become as *God* - in other words, independent of Him. The temptation was threefold: the fruit was good to eat, it was very pleasing to the eye and, it was *desirable* for the knowledge it could give. The first two aspects of the temptation were obviously related to their normal human make-up: their appetite for food and their appreciation of beauty - both of which were catered for elsewhere in the garden. The third aspect, could also have arisen from their human constitution, for presumably they were able to think and to reason - though in this case their reasoning turned out to be faulty!

From what I have just said, Tom, it is obvious that I disagree with your conclusions here. You decided (your point 1) that at the end of the sixth day of creation the *propensity in man to do that which is wrong, did not exist*. You also conjectured (point 3) that this propensity was actually introduced into man's *physical being by the serpent*. On the first point, I would comment that if there were no hunger or thirst, no needs, no wishes, no inclinations, in fact no desires, then there would of necessity be **no actions** whatsoever. There is a whole range of human desires that can be legitimately satisfied by the loving provisions of God. On the other hand, there exists hardly any of these valid desires which cannot lead to sin, hence my comments in the previous paragraph. With regard to your other point, do you really believe that a literal serpent had the power, actually to implant alien propensities into the highest of God's creatures?

Your further comments in point 3, Tom, make it absolutely clear that you thought there had been a sudden transformation in the literal, physical bodies of the man and woman - a change from very good, to the exact opposite. You say: '*this was their first knowledge of evil.*' I cannot agree with either of these conclusions; they are both merely conjectures - completely unjustified by anything in the text.

In point 2 you query why the couple, after their disobedience, should have become embarrassed at their nakedness - obviously you recognised that there was no indication in the story of the sin being in any way a sexual one. Nevertheless, you realised that '*disobeying God had brought both shame and fear*'. This was shown in the anthropomorphic picture, given in Gen 3,8 9, of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and calling to Adam, Adam had replied: 'I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. So, why *naked*? Again, it seems to me that the meaning is pretty clear without having to take it literally, I think that the expression is entirely appropriate.

Consider what had happened. Hitherto they had enjoyed an existence of beauty and harmony: the beauty of the garden and harmony, not only with each other but also in their special relationship with the Creator himself. But they had disobeyed him, they had let him down. Instead of being content with the munificent bounty with which he had surrounded them, they had wished for the unattainable - to be as God himself. Suddenly the enormity of their situation had flashed upon them. In place of the anticipated benefit from their action, was deep shame and fear. How could they possibly face the Creator now! The open, carefree and transparent life they had enjoyed had suddenly ended. Their shame and embarrassment was so great that all they could think to do was to hide. Now, terrified of meeting their Maker, they felt completely exposed, vulnerable - 'naked'!

It is this, surely, that we are intended to see in our parable. Their relationship with God was destroyed. Even the harmony between each other had been spoiled - what they now had was shame, fear, and pathetic excuses as they each tried to pass the blame of their actions elsewhere. With each of them trying to justify themselves, how could they even trust each other. They were embarrassed and ashamed in every direction, with a desperate wish to escape from the sad reality of their situation. Whilst living in harmony with their creator, they had been protected from such feelings. Now, having taken the forbidden fruit, they experienced for the first time this *evil*: fear and guilt.

As you rightly pointed out in point 5, Tom, after the couple's disobedience they did not die immediately. The simple answer, I think, is that the words of Genesis 2:17 do not constitute a judicial sentence of execution. The REB rendering seems to express more nearly how I understand it: '*...the day you eat... you are surely doomed to die.*' Their expulsion from the garden, with its banishment both from access to the tree of life and the previous close contact with their Creator, involved the *inevitability* of death, for they were part of the natural, mortal creation.

The rest of the punishments for the man and the woman, described in Genesis 3, can also be seen, I think, as inevitable results of their removal from the garden. For instance, are we to take literally that, for Adam's sake, the whole of the good earth was to be cursed? Would not the coping with thorns and thistles be another assured result of having to produce a living from the produce of the 'field' instead of the easy life of tending the special garden? He would now have to deal with the whole range of created vegetation. Thorns and thistles can be relished by goats, but can cause a lot of toil and sweat for a man! Likewise the comments on the future prospects for the woman: would not much of her problems result from the much harder life now in prospect. Also, having distanced themselves from the guidance of the Creator, was it not inevitable that their relationship with each other could easily deteriorate? Think about it, Tom.

Comments and an appeal to the 'Appeal Committee' - from Harry

Gentlemen, an acknowledgement from you that it is at least possible - and indeed allowable - for others to understand Genesis 1-3 rather differently from yourselves would be welcome. If you will consider the interpretation as outlined above by 'Dick', you will see that the whole of your 'Fundamental Principles' from 2.i) to 2 iv) inclusive, have, on his understanding of the matter, been refuted. On the same basis, your booklet's remaining arguments in support of your 'secondary use' of the word Sin could also be disposed of. Also, there is nothing in Dick's conception of the subject that could not easily be shown to agree with Paul in Romans chapter 8. Nothing in the Genesis chapters supports your belief in a 'fall' that suddenly changed man's physical nature from very good to very bad, to literally defiled flesh. Man is made as he is: 'subject to vanity... by reason of him who subjected the same in hope' (Rom-8:20). Please gentlemen, reconsider your judgmental attitudes and allow others the right to their own views.

Cyril Masters

Editor's comment: We wish to thank Brother Cyril Marsters for his excellent article in which he reports the observations of Tom, Dick and Harry, and for his willingness for us to reproduce it here. We, of the Nazarene Fellowship don't think Brother Cyril went far enough in some respects but can understand his reluctance to be outspoken and, like so many others, would, it appears to us, rather make changes from within the community. Whether they will ever be allowed to get rid of Clause V, amongst others, before Jesus returns, seems to us very unlikely.

Russell.

We also thank Brother Allon Maxwell for this next response to the same article:

Hello Russell,

I am taking up your invitation to comment on the article from the "Appeal To All Ecclesias Committee" published in the Nov/Dec 2005 Circular letter. It stirred old memories. In 1972 I was disfellowshipped for rejecting all the things it promotes.

The essence of the article seems to be that God required Jesus to submit Himself to that cruel and agonising death to cleanse Himself from an inherent defect, variously labelled as "sin-in-the-flesh," or "the devil," or a "sin principle" residing in His flesh and blood body.

What a slander against God! It charges God with the most terrible injustice! How could it be true that God would impose the torture of the cross on His beloved, sinless, (Hebrews 4:15) holy, harmless, and undefiled Son, (Hebrews 7:26) in order to "cleanse" him from something he was not responsible for? (And didn't have anyway! More about that below.)

It all falls apart in the interpretation of Genesis 1:31 "*God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was VERY GOOD.*" This passage is somehow manipulated to refer to Adam's inherent physical nature at creation. Without the slightest Scriptural support it is alleged that when Adam and Eve sinned, this "good" nature became "genetically modified" by the addition of a physical condition which they call "not good." (Also described as "sin-in-the-flesh", or "the devil," or a "sin principle"). And from there it is only a short step to lay the blame for all human sin on this inherited physical principle. In its worst form this becomes a barrier to true repentance.

The simple truth is that the Genesis record does not give even the slightest hint of any change of nature as a consequence of that first sin! Nor does it appear anywhere else in Scripture that anything genetic was added to the nature which God created. The few Scriptures which are claimed to support the existence of "sin-in-the flesh," are readily capable of much more satisfying explanations.

1. SIN IN THE FLESH

The term “sin in the flesh” occurs only once in Scripture – in Romans 8:3. It is completely misleading to use this phrase as a compound noun to refer to some ill defined mythical “entity” residing in human flesh. Properly understood, it refers to the arena (flesh) in which “sin” was defeated and condemned. Living in a human body just like ours, Jesus condemned the practice of “sin,” by NOT sinning.

2. SINFUL FLESH

The term “sinful flesh” in Romans 8:3 is not a description of human nature. It does not describe a built in “inherited” principle predisposing its unfortunate possessors to sin.

It is in fact about OWNERSHIP of “the flesh.” Refer back to chapter 6 of the same Epistle, where Paul PERSONIFIES “sin” as a slave master who owns all who have obeyed him by yielding to the practice of sin. He does not own them because they were born with a genetic defect. He owns them because they committed sin.

In Romans 8:3, the Greek which has been translated “sinful flesh” is literally “flesh of sin,” meaning “flesh owned by sin.” When Paul says Jesus was in the LIKENESS of “flesh owned by sin” there is an implied contrast between Jesus and all other men. There was no difference at all in physical nature. But there was a huge difference in ownership. The flesh of Jesus was never owned by the slave master to whom all other men have sold themselves. Hence the use of the word “likeness” to make this important distinction.

3. FOR HIS OWN SINS?

The article has used Hebrews 5:3 & 7:27-28 to claim that, like the High Priest, Jesus needed to sacrifice for Himself to be “cleansed.”

This is a complete misuse of the passage! To say that the “holy harmless undefiled” (Hebrews 7:26) Son of God needed “cleansing” of any sort, flies in the face of everything the Scripture tells us about our sinless Saviour.

Of course the passages do say that the HIGH PRIEST needed to first offer for HIS OWN SINS. However, it only takes a little careful reading to understand that there is a very great difference between Jesus and the High Priest in this respect. The High Priest was a sinner who needed his own personal forgiveness, before he could represent the sinless anti type who made the sacrifice for the people. The High Priest was a regular sinner, who needed the same forgiveness every year, before sacrificing for the people. On the other hand, Jesus was never a sinner, never defiled, and never in need of that priestly sacrifice for Himself. Thus He was able to offer for the people without that initial personal sacrifice. He made ONE only sacrifice – NOT TWO like the High Priest. And He made it ONCE for all time (Heb 10:10) – NOT annually like the High Priest.

To say as this article does, that Hebrews 7:27 infers that Jesus offered for personal inherited physical uncleanness, rather than for actual personal sin, ADDS something to Hebrews 9:27 which is clearly not intended by the writer. It says that the High Priest offered for his OWN sins, NOT for an inherited genetic defect! The passage in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16) from which the reference is derived says the same thing.

The whole emphasis of Scripture is that Jesus sacrificed himself for OUR sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18). We did need to be “brought to God.” But Jesus did not. He was already there!

Brother Allon Maxwell.

A few additional comments:

Under the heading “In The Beginning” we read,

“From this our reader would conclude that as yet evil, including the propensity within man to do that which is wrong, did not exist.”

‘Propensity’ is not the right word to use here because without law, no one can do wrong and once law is put in place then we have the choice to do right or wrong. To say we are biased to do wrong is to accuse our Creator of making it harder for us to do right than wrong; harder to keep the law than brake it. Who would accuse a Just Creator of acting so unfairly towards those He so loved? How could He then justly blame His creatures for sinning or justly punish them when they did?

Every law God has given was and is for our good - because He loves us enough to provide His only begotten Son for us. I seriously wonder, have any of these writers for the Appeal Committee had children and have they not ever noticed how little ones want so much to do what is right to please their parents? Do we not as parents help and encourage our little ones to do what is right – or do we make it difficult for them so that we can find fault and then punish them for their failures? Of cause not, and neither does God make it more difficult for us. This talk of ‘propensity,’ ‘tendency,’ ‘bias,’ ‘predisposition’ and such like expressions is out of place in this context. Law gives choice and with choice we have free will. That is the sum of the matter. God has never given a law to mankind that he is unable to keep. Indeed He exhorts us to keep His laws, it is only right and good that we should, and if we fail He is anxious to forgive for Jesus sake, so that He can give eternal life to all who have such faith.

“The propensity in man to do that which is wrong,” has never existed. On the other hand the law of God was there from the beginning; a just law which offered free choice - the choice to do right or wrong, and the desire to choose right or wrong will depend upon our reasoning. “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

A little further down we read:

“Obviously the “very good” state at the end of the sixth day no longer applied to the bodies of the man and the woman. Those propensities to disobedience which the serpent had introduced to them were now part of their physical being...”

What assumption! Nowhere does Scripture support this nonsense and in over one and fifty years no Christadelphian has ever proved a change from the “very good” state of Adam’s and Eve’s bodies! This idea, inherited from the Roman Catholic Church, has always been taken for granted and has become inbred in all Christadelphian thinking and it colours all their arguments. It really comes down to the fact that they do not understand why Christ died. They make out that Adam’s “physical being” was changed to a nature which needed destroying and that Jesus’ martyrdom was the example of what sinful flesh deserved. But they have totally ignored the principle of Jesus self-sacrifice – that of the innocent voluntarily bearing the penalty due to the guilty.

Under the section Fundamental Principles we are told:

“But the clothing which they provided for themselves was rather scanty... It did not cover the parts of their bodies that had sinned, that is, their ears, eyes, hands and mouths. If our new reader of the Bible consulted the marginal note, he would read ‘things to gird around.’ With our access to concordances, we discover that the Hebrew word means ‘a girdle to cover the loins.’ In other words, what they covered was their shame and fear. They had already been told to be fruitful and multiply, so they would have realised that the evil state of their bodies would be transmitted to their children.”

What are we to make of this? Their clothing “did not cover the parts of their bodies that had sinned – their ears, eyes, hands and mouth.” Why this dissection of the body? It is the person as a whole that sins, it

does not make any sense at all to say that one part of their body sinned but not another. Then what about the aprons? – “a girdle to cover the loins. In other words, what was covered was their shame and their fear.” What has the Appeal Committee gained “with their access to concordances”? While Adam and Eve may have felt the aprons would cover their shame it could not cover their fear. They “hid” in the garden because they were afraid. Afraid of what? “That the evil state of their bodies would be transmitted to their children”? Where do these writers get this stuff from? Do they not know that what they call “the evil state of their bodies” reflects badly on their Creator who gave them those “fearfully and wonderfully made” bodies? Then we are told that “God provided them more adequate clothing which would cover their whole bodies.” Well, that is, all except the parts that had sinned – the ears, eyes, hands and mouths...

I have no desire to consider more of this booklet – it gives me no pleasure to go on... Is it really unity on the basis of Bible teaching that the Appeal Committee want?

Brother Russell Gregory.

Rightly Dividing The Word

St Paul wrote certain things hard for some to understand as St Peter tells us in his epistle, for example 2 Peter 3:15 and Romans chapter 7.

The Law Giver is greater than the Law and we must accept that all things from the time of Adam in the Garden of Eden are designed for the development of good character for those who will give obedience to the Law. Keep this in mind and one can rightly divide and discriminate between the physical law and the abstract law.

If one does not do this, it is wrong to profess to know and understand the doctrine of the Atonement and the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus and preach to others ones own unscriptural conclusions and consequent errors.

To the Roman believers who knew the Law Paul expounded its meaning and its relationship to the Messiah. To the Corinthians He declared, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified... That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:2 & 5.

The mistaken view of Genesis 3:17 to 20 is that natural decay and death was the penalty for Adam’s sin, this view makes Paul’s teaching of Romans 5:12 imply that Adam was not capable of dying before he sinned, also it makes Paul incorrect in telling the Corinthians (chapter 15), “That was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural.” Thus, after the death in 1871 of their pioneer Dr Thomas the Christadelphians as he named them, were saddled with the false doctrine of his successor Robert Roberts as it is contained in Clause V of their BASF, thus destroying the legal basis of Paul’s teaching to the Romans and others who read his epistles. The ‘changed nature’ doctrine cannot be found in Genesis; if it was, how then could Paul write what he does in Romans 5:12?

The answer is in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians chapter 3 verse 3, “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...” verse 5, “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit...” verse 9, “and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul, here is speaking of things to be known by the true ecclesia of Christ which should be in the heavenly places in Christ in order to understand the mystery (or secret) which had been hid in God, as Paul

relates to the Ephesians 2:5-7, "God... hath quickened us together with Christ... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

It is notable that Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4 and completes it with the added declaration, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

It is quite sensible to ask where did Paul receive the doctrine of Federal Imputation of sin or of being concluded under sin, not having committed sin, if it is not found in Genesis in connection with Adam, yet stated without any proof as fact in Clause V of the BASF? To be concluded under the sin of Adam does not mean one is bound to commit sin. Jesus was made under the Law but He did not violate that Law. Why corrupt and change Paul's legal and federal teaching in Romans 5:12 etc. into a process of gradual decay and death on account of ignorance of the subject?

Paul's motive in addressing the Roman believers was not to teach that Adam's corruptible created nature was passed on to his posterity by the physical means ordained of God. He was showing that there were two Sons of God, Adam and Jesus, one who sinned and became the Federal Head of those who were constituted sinners legally, in his loins, yet not sinners personally; and Jesus who was sinless and righteous and became the Federal Head of all who by belief and faith were made or constituted righteous, not by works but by grace.

Why should any reader of St Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 3 verses 20 to 31 think anything otherwise than that Paul was teaching of the divinely imputed sin of Adam on the Federal Principle? Taking into account the important context of this chapter, Paul includes up until the sacrifice of Christ those responsible under the Law of Moses and before that, the Edenic position (Genesis 3:22-23).

We must understand the point of Paul's statement, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Means that the many who were born later on could not be classed under the "all have sinned" because they did not exist when Paul wrote these words. Therefore, he could not have been referring to personal sin. Paul goes on to say in Romans 5:12 "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men." So I can take the liberty in saying that those in the loins of Adam could not and did not sin as persons but were constituted as sinners that God might justify them eventually by faith in His Son. – Romans 1 to 11 and 16 to 21.

In Romans 3:19 to 31 Paul is establishing the wisdom of God in the introduction of the Federal Principle of imputation by faith as shown in the case of Abraham's faith who believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 'In Adam' and in Abraham is not by physical descent but by imputation as so with 'in Christ.'

A recent Christadelphian critic could not understand or accept that to be concluded under sin did not make one a personal sinner but Paul stated, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." But this does not mean they are cursed if they keep it.

The Law could not curse Jesus but He allowed Himself to be made a curse for the sake of those under it, that they might be delivered from under it through the Law of the spirit of life in Himself which is the opposite of the Law of sin and death, this is a legal position, not a physical position. In my view it is ignorance of Paul's "Federal Head" teaching which makes his references to the Law difficult to understand, yet what he says at the outset – "Without the law sin is dead," is proof that sin is not an element in the physical flesh, but an act of transgression of Law. Therefore said Paul, "I was alive without the Law once but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death." Surely the common death was nothing new to Paul and could not be the death he was referring to. No, this was something that the Law had enlightened him to through the revelation of Jesus after his Damascus experience. Talking of the disobedience of Adam, Paul uses the term "offence" – Romans 5:15 – contrasting it with the free gift, by the offence many became legally dead, but the free gift to the many through faith in Jesus brought justification of life. Romans 5:18-21. "Moreover," says Paul, "the law entered that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded grace did much more abound. That as

sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now if sin reigned unto natural death, there would be nothing left for grace to reign over - there would be no righteousness reigning unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. Paul is speaking of the legal death hanging over all as a deferred sentence that can be removed by symbolic death (baptism) into the death Jesus suffered in the place of Adam. When this sentence is removed sin no longer reigns, but for those who believe sin to be in the physical flesh, only physical death can remove it, and this makes baptism invalid and the continuance of the reign of the death by sin which Paul says passed upon all men imputed to have sinned (not personally) in the loins of Adam.

If this Federal Head teaching of Paul is not the Gospel of Salvation what are we saved from in believing and dying into the death Jesus suffered? We are not saved from experiencing the death common to our corruptible nature for all have been subject to that from the creation of Adam apart from premature infliction in various forms. We cannot free ourselves from experiencing death by natural ailments and other causes, but the way is open to all to be made free from the Law of sin and death, that is, by passing from under one federal Head to another. The reign of Sin and the death by sin is then over, that a faithful service to a new Master results in eternal life.

This is why Paul marvelled at the grace of God in Christ and His mercy in revealing to him the mystery from the ages which had been hid in God. As Paul said, “The commandment was ordained to life” and considering the righteousness which is in the Law he was blameless; how mystifying! So he continues his discourse on what the Law could not do; not because it was impossible to be kept by flesh and blood, but the Law was weak for another reason. The reason was his knowledge of the Law showing him when without Christ, to be concluded under the offence of Adam – he was sold under sin and needed to be made free to serve in newness of life. Romans 5:19-21. While he was in service to Bondmaster Sin he could only expect Sin’s wages and abide in death. This is what he informed the Roman believers who had changed masters. Paul thanked God that they had left that service and had become servants of righteousness (Romans 6:17, 18). Under Sin’s dominion personified as the believer’s former lord in Dr Thomas’ explanation of redemption (Eureka Volume 1 page 20), all service whether good or bad was accredited to that lord until made free by purchase, and as Dr Thomas rightly says, “The purchaser is God and the Ransom paid is the precious blood in which was the life of Jesus as of a Lamb without spot or blemish.”

Some people believe Adam’s flesh was condemned because he had sinned and his very good nature was changed to a process of dying by decay and return to dust, but this cannot be the case for the sentence of an inflicted death came upon Adam as soon as he ate of the forbidden fruit, not when he reached the age of 930 years and died as a result of his created corruptible nature.

“In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Adam ate and he died legally. (See Romans 5:12 & 15 – both ‘legal’). This was the offence St Paul speaks of, and the Federal death that legally passed upon all men – a conclusion under Sin as a Master. Adam needed redemption and was provisionally made free, yet death as a legal sentence reigned from Adam to Moses even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, but death did not take effect, if like Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah and Abraham, they saw in Eden the Lamb of God who was foreshadowed as the One who would take away Adam’s sin, “the Sin of the World” as John Baptist declared.

In concluding all under Adam’s sin, God, in His love and mercy was able to conclude all under the Righteousness of His Son Jesus in the way He has appointed. The Death by Sin which God passed upon all men could be remitted through baptism into the death Jesus suffered in the place of Adam, otherwise all would need their own representative or substitute to die in their place, though, to be legitimate, such a representative or substitute must not be concluded under sin nor the law of sin and death. Hence the Son of God whom God provided for that purpose on the Federal Principle.

One act of faith - out of Adam the Old Man, and into Christ the New Man (See Ephesians 4:22-24 and Galatians 3:26-29).

Baptism into the death of Christ by water and Spirit, was a dying in symbol of the death that came by Adam’s sin, not for our personal sins, for sin is not imputed where there is no law under which a person can be condemned. All were constituted sinners in Adam’s loins when he sinned, but they were not sinners by

transgression of law but concluded under the slavery into which they were sold through Adam. So St Paul when reflecting on his unconverted state in Adam was moved to say, "I am carnal, sold under sin." But after his experience at Damascus and baptism into the death of Christ by water and Spirit he was a new man in the likeness of the resurrection of Christ, but not in the glorified nature in which Christ was raised, Paul knew that was yet to come from what Jesus revealed to him.

Paul prophesied that after his decease grievous wolves would enter into the true Church and would turn away its members from the truth unto fables. Not only that but they would change the ordinances that were essential to salvation and inheritance in the kingdom of God on the earth. The important ordinance of baptism by water and Spirit was replaced by baby-sprinkling with the sign of the Cross and with confirmation by god-parents. Alternatively one could express belief in Jesus Christ with no knowledge or understanding of why He was born of a virgin or why His death was essential for our salvation.

Nothing has changed to alter the declaration of Jesus to St Peter when he replied to Peter's question "But whom sayest thou that I am?" Peter's answer was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus answered him, "Thou art Peter and upon this Rock will I build my Church." The Rock was the statement Peter had made, the Church of Christ was not built on Peter as the Roman Catholics profess, for St Paul, as his equal, says, "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Peter had no successor; what he bound on earth was bound in heaven and vice versa on the authority of Christ. Therefore Peter said "There is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved," and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Not the Virgin Mary. She would shame the lot of them if she were on the earth now as a result of the resurrection of life, but there is a time appointed for that event. Even so Come Lord Jesus.

We now consider how important Baptism by water and Spirit was to St Peter when through God's calling out of the Gentiles under a New Covenant through the sacrificial death of His Son, Peter was told to visit Cornelius, a good man who feared God but who was alienated from the Covenants of promise and therefore needed to be 'in Christ,' the Seed of the woman and to become a child of Abraham and of God.

As a Jew Peter was reluctant to visit a Gentile, but he carried out his mission and realised its importance when the voice from Heaven declared "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." (Acts 10:14).

Peter related to Cornelius and all his household the things concerning Jesus and the Kingdom of God. "And the Holy Spirit came upon all them that heard the word." This was a reversal of the normal practice which Jesus had related to Nicodemus – "Except a man be born of water and Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." He must be born again, but how? By dying unto Adamic Sin through a burial in water upon belief and understanding of the Gospel of Salvation in the Son of God and rising to a new life in Jesus..

St Peter shows then that though Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit before being baptised the significance of Christ's mission and death must be correctly observed and Peter did bind this upon all he taught afterwards, and in doing so destroyed the so-called authority of their self appointed Pope.

Please note that relationship to God is by Law and Grace; this has been demonstrated by Paul as a result of his conversion to Christ and the fact that without the sacrifice of Christ the Law could not give life from the dead. Paul said "The law was holy and the commandment just and good."

Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid says Paul, for if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" In other words, all concluded under sin, can, through belief and faith in Jesus Christ, be concluded under righteousness, God being the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

In conclusion I commend to you a few comments by Dr Adam Clarke D.D. on some of the difficulties people find in Romans 7:-

“It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that the Apostle speaks here of his regenerate state; and that what was, in such a state, true to himself, must be true of all others in the same state. This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character, it requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of this Epistle, to see that the Apostle is here either personating a Jew, under the Law and without the Gospel, or showing what his own state was... while without Christ.”

Brother Phil Parry

Have you noticed that Clauses 24 and 25 of the Christadelphian Statement of Faith do not harmonise with Revelation 20?

Clause 24 teaches that at the second coming of Christ there will be a resurrection of those who have become responsible to the teaching of what they believe to be the Gospel of Salvation and have submitted to it. The dead or alive, obedient and the disobedient will be summoned to His judgment seat to be judged according to their works and receive in body according to what they have done whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Romans 2:5-6,16; 14:10,12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Revelation 11:18).

Clause 25 states that the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and the second death, and the faithful invested with immortality and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything. Many references to the scriptures follow, and speak of the reign of Jesus for a thousand years with the faithful – of the first resurrection.

How does this compare with revelation 20? It contradicts it. Only the resurrected faithful live and reign with Christ a thousand years – this is the first resurrection, the blessed and holy, on which the second death hath no power. The Christadelphian B.A.S.F. is in gross error. It has the Faithful and unfaithful, obedient and disobedient all at one and the same time appearing before a judgment seat of Christ. One can only conclude that the rejected live a further one thousand years to experience the second death which takes place at the end of Christ’s reign when God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 20:4-6; 11-15).

P.Parry

Here follows a selection of ‘Posts’ posted on a Christadelphian Forum.

I have not sought permission to publish anyone else’s correspondence (posts) but I think readers will gather most of what has been said from what is published here:

In answer to a request asking a general question about the Nazarenes in different countries and how many there are, I replied:

Dear All, Yes there are quite a few ‘Nazarene’s’ in Australia, the U.S.A., Canada, and just a few in Europe. For the most part, Nazarenes are amongst older brethren and sisters who, having been in the Christadelphian community for many years have become dissatisfied with some of the teaching regarding the atonement, baptism, judgment, and resurrection, or with some other aspect of the B.A.S.F. There are also a few of us who have never been Christadelphians and have come out from other communities.

The usual pattern is for these brethren and sisters to be told that if they keep their opinions to themselves and not talk of them to others, especially the ‘young in the Truth’, then they can stay in ‘fellowship.’

In my case, when I said I would not agree to be silenced this way I was told I must go, with the proviso that I was “welcome to come back any time so long as I accepted the B.A.S.F.” And that is something I could never do.

In the October 1998 issue of The Christadelphian the editor, Michael Ashton, makes it very clear the B.A.S.F. is of equal footing to Scripture and both must be accepted as true. He states categorically that:-

a). There are no grounds for fellowship with anyone not agreeing that the B.A.S.F. is entirely first principle teaching.

b). There are no grounds for fellowship with anyone who may agree that the B.A.S.F. is first principle teaching but who may be willing to accept into fellowship someone who does not entirely agree that they are.

c). There are no grounds for fellowship with anyone who sees difficulty with even a single element of the B.A.S.F.

These claims are incredible and prompted me to write to him in protest but being out of fellowship I did not get a reply. We know there are many in the Christadelphian community who are as shocked and dismayed as we are, for such claims are equal to that of the Pope - the Pope claiming infallibility for himself, the editor claiming it for the B.A.S.F.

At the same time as the above appeared in the Christadelphian Magazine I was in correspondence with another Christadelphian and I quote from his letter:-

“No community is perfect, nor its decrees infallible: and once it ceases to be self-critical, or once it regards its own writings as the criterion of Truth, then it has joined the ranks of all the others who bring Christianity into discredit.”

Need I say more?

Yes, I know there are many, probably thousands, in Christadelphia who have a better understanding of Scripture than ever Robert Roberts had when he drew up the Statement of Faith; its a pity that the body feels tied to it any more. While there have been interminable arguments as to how certain parts of it should be understood, its effect is to tie up the Christadelphian body in knots and from which no one seems to be prepared to cut it free.

I hope this helps people to understand why the Nazarene Fellowship is so concerned about the Christadelphian community rather than leaving it alone.

With Love in Jesus to all. Russell.

Dear Mike, Thank you for your post regarding Michael Ashton. What I wrote of him can be verified by anyone one who wishes to find out; but more important is not what he wrote in 1998 but what he believes today, which seems much more satisfactory. We are all entitled to change as we grow in understanding.

Michael Ashton has been receiving the Nazarene Fellowship magazine at the Christadelphian Office for the past twelve to fifteen years and I know from information fed back to me that it is read by others in the Office; your note is the first indication I have received of any change of heart and I thank you for letting me know.

With Love in Jesus, Russell.