

Nazarene Circular Letter No 218

Feb/March 2006

In this Issue:

Page	1	Editorial	Sister Helen Brady
Page	2	Did God Forsake Jesus on the Cross?	Brother Eric Moore
Page	2	The Resurrection of Jesus	Brother Edward Turney
Page	11	Posts we have placed on a Christadelphian Forum	

EDITORIAL

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends,

Loving Greetings. Cornelius is the third of six centurions mentioned in the New Testament. Evidently he was a centurion of the Italian cohort, the equivalent of a regiment, stationed at Caesarea a year or two after the crucifixion of Jesus. He was probably a pious Roman who, disillusioned by polytheism and pagan philosophy, had gravitated spiritually towards Judaism.

Cornelius is described as a “devout man who feared God with all his house, gave alms liberally to the people and prayed constantly to God.” At 3 o’clock one afternoon he distinctly saw an angel who told him that his prayers and alms had been accepted by God and that he was to send to Joppa (Jaffa) to fetch Simon, called Peter, staying with Simon the Tanner, whose house was by the sea. Cornelius told two of his household servants and one of his soldiers what had happened and dispatched them to Joppa to find Peter.

Meanwhile Peter staying in the house by the sea, went up on the roof to pray, where like Cornelius, something remarkable happened to him. A great sheet was let down from the sky full of strange animals and birds; a voice called to him saying ‘Rise, Peter, kill and eat,’ to which Peter answered. “No, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” The voice replied, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” This sequence was repeated three times before the sheet was taken up into the sky again. While Peter was puzzling out the meaning of his vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrived on the doorstep enquiring if Simon called Peter was staying there. It was then that the spirit told Peter, “Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them.” So Peter went down to greet them and to ask why they had come. The next day he set off with them to Caesarea with other brethren from Joppa. On Peter’s arrival, Cornelius, his family and friends were assembled waiting. Cornelius fell at Peter’s feet, then each explained their visions, and Peter added, ‘Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’ Peter then told them the good news of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection, and proclaimed the eternal purpose of God in sending Jesus to be the Saviour. While he was speaking, the holy spirit came to all those who were listening, to the astonishment of Peter and his Jewish companions from Joppa, because these Gentiles had not yet been baptized. Immediately Cornelius and his whole household were baptized “into the name of Jesus.”

This narrative is of particular interest to Gentiles amongst Jesus’ followers because it brought to a head the controversy between Peter and those at Jerusalem, insisting on circumcision. It was not until the first Council of Jerusalem under the chairmanship of James the brother of Jesus, that the issue was finally settled with only minimal demands being made of Gentile believers. This was as a result of reports from Paul and Barnabas, together with Peter’s own account of the conversion of Cornelius, the Roman centurion.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Love to all. Helen Brady.

We thank Brother Eric Moore for sending us the following piece in response to Sister Helen’s editorial in our last Circular Letter.

Did God forsake Jesus Christ on the Cross?

I can understand others thinking this, believing that Christ had sin in him or was made sin for us, therefore God could not look upon him any more.

Many Bible teachers have promoted the idea, because many of the translators of 2nd Corinthians 5:21 put it to read that way, for while we read in the King James Version - “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” Barnes writes – “For he hath made him to be sin for us” - The Greek here is, “for him who knew no sin, he hath made sin, or a sin-offering for us.” And in the Douay-Rheims Bible 1899 we read “Him, who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us: that we might be made the Justice of God in him.” Sin for us... That is, to be a sin offering, a victim for sin. Romans 8:3. (NIV.) – “God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”

Yet here we have Christ our Lord who trusted in His Father every step of His way, and then contrary to His belief, His Father is said to have forsaken Him.

What did our Lord believe?

John 12:27 – “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.”

John 16:32 – “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

Was it then a cry of desolation from the cross ? (Matthew 27: 46.)

I think not, but as Christ had during His life drawn attention to what scripture had said concerning him. i.e. -

Mark 12:35-37 - “And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple. How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.”

Read John 11:42, 43 - “And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice. Lazarus, come forth.”

Jesus, now looking down from the cross, viewing the scene below him, cried out the words of Psalm 22. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”

This is one of the 3 Psalms, 22, 23, 24 relating to the Messiah that virtually every Israelite knew by heart. Still they could not see the signs nor grasp His teaching.

There is other evidence showing God did not forsake Christ in His final hours, and it has to do with the more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed. (1 Pet. 1:19.)

Psalms 34:20 - "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

John 19:36 - "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."

Think about the beating and torture that our Lord suffered, about the spikes driven into His hands and feet, how was it possible that not one of His bones was broken, because His father had drawn a line on His suffering and saw to it that this line was not crossed.

Even Pilate marvelled at the shortness of it, and it was over before bones could be broken.

Mark 15:44 - "And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead."

John 19:33 - "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:"

Our Lord knew that His Father was with Him, had He not earlier said, (Matthew 26:53) "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Whilst it is thought by some that verse 1 of Psalm 22 means that God forsook the suffering Messiah, verse 24 specifically says that God did not - "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard."

Brother Eric Moore.

We are very pleased to be able to bring together two halves of an article written by Brother Edward Turney. I received the first half of this article about ten or twelve years ago, and I felt I couldn't do much with it while the second part was missing; thankfully the second half came to light in February this year while Brother John Stevenson was unpacking some boxes following his moving house. Thank you, John! I am sure you will all agree it was worth waiting for.

The Resurrection of Jesus

There is no doctrine of greater importance than the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus – it is the very keystone of the Christian arch which spans the gulf of death.

If that stone is deficient the bridge across the grave is imaginary; it has no more reality than the bridge of Mahomet over the abyss of Hell. If the stone is loose – to preserve the figure – the traveller fears to set his foot upon the structure – he is not assured of a safe passage. To be plain, it is desirable for firm faith and abiding peace not only to believe that Jesus rose again, but to have the certainty of the fact.

A clear knowledge of the value of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ will do more than any other thing to keep the possessor of it in the path of rectitude and to stimulate him to walk worthy of the kingdom and glory whereunto he has been called by the Gospel. He will every moment remember that Jesus is alive; that his present existence means his future return; that that return means the raising of the dead and the judgment of the world, when every man will receive according to his works.

Hence, the balance pole of the believer's life is weighted by just fears of punishment for wrong-doing, while the mark before his eye in the straight line of duty is that bright, unfading life which Jesus has enjoyed since the reanimation of His dead body.

Let us observe the effect of the resurrection of Jesus on His immediate disciples.

We gather from the various Gospel narratives that they were ignorant of its significance, "And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one another what the rising from the dead should mean." (Mark 9:9, 10).

From this state of ignorance, it follows that during the ministry of Christ His disciples had not rested their hopes for that glorious restoration of the Kingdom to Israel in an epoch beyond the close of their natural lives. They had not, in fact, connected their rewards with the idea of a resurrection from the grave.

There is nothing to cast a doubt upon this as the true state of their minds on the subject; on the contrary, their whole proceedings, both before and after their Master rose again, confirm it. Mark the despondency, fast merging upon despair, which seized them immediately after the crucifixion. Not the remembrance of the miracles they had seen was sufficient to arrest the sudden settling down of this mental anguish of darkness.

"The chief priests and our rulers," said they, "delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." (Luke 24:20, 21).

The depth of their disappointment is revealed by the simplicity of this testimony; they had no hope; not the faintest ray relieved the midnight gloom that had enwrapped their souls. The failure of the Messianic enterprise is in their estimation only too apparent from the words "beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done."

In a few more days they would have begun to forget their lost Master; each would have repaired to his home and resumed his former avocation; the authorities would have been convinced of the justice of their execution, and the wisdom of destroying and obliterating, in the blood of its chief, so dangerous a political heresy.

All this was the natural course of events in view of the unenlightened condition of the disciples and the rigid unbelief of their enemies.

We can easily picture how matters would have gone; the wreck of the movement would have been gradually carried away by the receding tide until no vestige would have remained visible to the eye, and, perhaps, not even a report of the occurrence had been chronicled on the page of history.

What is the value of all this? Does it not demonstrate the reality of the facts? Does it not present to us a face on which no line of hypocrisy or imposture can be traced? Whether we regard the friends or the foes of Jesus, their looks and manners betray no sign of craft or deception. His friends "trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel" – they knew not "what the rising of the dead should mean."

His foes discredited entirely His whole mission; ridiculed His claims; hated and despised His professed authority; and, partly through fear of Rome, anxious to rid the land of a pretender and an insurrectionist, they went through what was little better than a mock trial, and inhumanely hurried off the victim to execution. At this point there was, no doubt, in their minds, an end to the whole affair. As a precaution against the dregs of fanaticism, they guarded the tomb until the excitement should have died away.

In studying the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, we repeat that these proceedings should not be lightly passed over. They show us exactly in what aspect His death was viewed by all parties; and, as we shall shortly see, form an important element in the evidence relating to the resurrection. Let us look at the disciples on the third day.

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared; and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they much perplexed there about, behold two men stood by them in shining garments. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again? And they remembered His words.” (Luke 24:1-8).

There is no sign of cunning here; no indication of plot; and as little of hallucination or delusion. The narrative discloses no attempt to surprise or startle by the mode of describing the scene; not a word is redundant, and every word bears the impress of truth.

“It was very early in the morning, the first day of the week” – this is a most important piece of information: it tells us just what we should expect to find in the circumstances of the case. A Jew could not do anything on the Sabbath Day: he was strictly prohibited by law. The disciples, therefore could not go to the sepulchre on Saturday; but “when the Sabbath was past (Mark), as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week (Matthew), Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint Him.” (Mark).

As soon as it was practicable, the heart-broken disciples were there, and first among them the women. Here is exactly the spontaneous flow of affection – but mark how sad it is. This mother, whose soul had been lacerated by the murder of her holy Son, had come, attended in her sorrow by others, whose hopes were also stayed in the promises that Son had given them – not for a glorious meeting with their resurrected beloved; not to witness His triumph over death and the grave; not to behold His immortality mock by His murderers; no, they had come with eyes red and swollen from weeping and loss of sleep; with hearts overwhelmed with despair.

That which they carried in their hands was a meet emblem of their condition. No funeral dirge could speak with a voice of woe like those “sweet spices which they had brought that they might come and anoint Him.” That they had no knowledge, and consequently no expectation of His resurrection is, by this circumstance, put beyond the possibility of even a doubt.

The great perplexity which Luke notices on their not finding Jesus in the sepulchre follows as a matter of course. The first impulse was to hasten back and inform the other disciples of what had happened; but that story did not convince them; they had no thought of the event, and the words of the women “seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.”

But to make sure, “Peter ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.” Peter was not satisfied whether Jesus was risen to life, or whether someone had removed the dead body; he did not know; he was confident only of one thing – that Jesus was not there. For both himself and John had entered the vault, and had seen only the linen clothes and the napkin that was about Jesus’ head wrapped together in a place by itself.

Upon John this had a different effect: “he saw and believed.” Nothing could be further from the appearance of fiction or imposture than these incidents.

They concur to prove that the disciples of Jesus did not believe that He would rise from the dead; so that they cannot be justly suspected, before the resurrection is alleged to have taken place, either of hallucination or of deliberately spreading that report in order to deceive others.

Let us now change our position and survey the matter from another point of view.

The chief priests and the Pharisees who had procured sentence of death against Jesus were not altogether free from mental disquietude, even after the dead man had been taken down from the cross and laid in Joseph’s tomb.

They gave expression to their apprehension in the following manner:-

“the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, they came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.” Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first” (Matthew 27:62-64).

It will here be noticed that although the priests and the Pharisees had observed the declaration of Jesus that He should rise again the third day, it had made no more impression upon them as regards believing it that it had upon His disciples.

The disciples had “heard and not heard” but the Pharisees had heard and feared. They had not feared it would come true, but that the disciples would report it to be so, and endeavour to confirm the story by stealing the body and hiding it. In granting their request, “Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch, go your way; make it as sure as you can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.” (vs. 65, 66). Everything was then done that could be done to afford security and to ensure success.

In this interval of anxious silence, let us examine the scheme of the betrayers and murderers, that is, the scheme they insinuated against the disciples when they addressed Pilate.

Suppose that no watch had been set; that no great stone had been placed across the mouth of the cave; that the disciples had actually stolen the lifeless form. This will give the plan the priests and Pharisees were afraid of all the force of reality; and now let us enquire whether it would have realised their fears; whether the stealing and hiding of the dead body would have been sufficient to establish universal belief in the resurrection of Jesus; would have been sufficient to account for what has been done and suffered for His name.

The impartial investigator will at once perceive the weakness of this position. If the disciples falsely affirmed Jesus to be risen and were in possession of His body, it had been easy for the rulers to constrain them to deliver it up. There must have been witnesses of the theft, for it is impossible to imagine the guard to have been asleep long enough and fast enough to allow a competent number of persons to roll away the ponderous gate of stone and carry off the corpse.

Besides all this, although the report we are now taking for correct was circulated among the Jews, we find no mention of any effort to compel the delinquents to restore the stolen property, which assuredly would have been the case had the authorities credited the guilty charge.

While the disciples disbelieved in the resurrection, they manifested nothing but disappointment at the death; and if they knew their Master to be still dead, how shall we discover a reason for the sudden change of sentiment and feeling displayed in their enthusiasm and readiness to suffer in the name of the resurrected Jesus?

It is hard to persuade ourselves that one sane man could be found willing to build up so profitless and dangerous an imposition; but the difficulty is almost immeasurably increased when we consider that several hundreds of people would have to be in the same mind. Deception is always carried on for an advantage; but what advantage could a few fishermen hope to gain by concealing the dead body of a man and giving it out that He was alive?

It is not once hinted that the disciples assayed to make money out of their professed miraculous powers; they are never seen trying to exalt themselves either politically or socially; all they did or endeavoured to do was to travel up and down teaching and proclaiming Jesus to be risen again, to be alive, and that He was the cause of both what they preached and what they performed. If this were deceiving it bears no analogy to any other instance on record. Nothing men covet or desire could possibly be obtained by it, and the greatest risk was incurred; for to urge the claims of the Nazarene, as did the apostles, was high treason against the state and punishable with death.

If we accept the account of the resurrection as true, everything on the part of the disciples and of the Jews and Romans is intelligible; but if we deny it, no theory can be conceived that will explain the course taken by either friends or enemies.

The angel, Matthew relates, had told the women who came to the sepulchre to direct the rest of the disciples to meet Jesus upon a certain mountain in Galilee where he “had appointed them.” When they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted.” If the object of the narrator had been to palm off a forgery, he would never have written the last sentence.

Instead of telling what took place like an honest man, not suspecting that the truth in any shape might militate against the credit of his statement, he would have said they all believed, not that “some doubted.” This very doubting gives force to the alleged fact of the resurrection, because it implies that some person assuming to be Jesus stood before them; it further renders conspiracy and fraud impossible, because they were divided among themselves; it also goes to show that they were not, as some have suggested, labouring under an optical or nervous illusion.

Their obedience to the command Jesus gave them on this occasion to “go and teach all nations” is proof that though at first some of them did not believe it was Jesus, they were fully persuaded of it before the close of the interview.

It was in the evening of the third day after the crucifixion that Jesus’ uncle, Cleopas, and another disciple were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a village between seven and eight English miles to the north-west, and as was perfectly natural their conversation turned upon the recent events in the Holy City, the trial, execution, and burial of Jesus. Those men had been told in the early morning before they started that Jesus was risen; “Certain women of their company” – one was Cleopas’ own wife, for he was husband to Mary’s sister – brought the intelligence; it had only “made them astonished.” As they walked “they communed together and reasoned” but they were far from reasoning themselves into the conclusion that Jesus was alive.

Were these men in a mood at all favourable to a deception of the senses? Was there anything about their conduct that bore the slightest suspicion of giving currency to a fraudulent tale? From all we can gather of them it is manifest they neither anticipated the death nor had the least expectation of the resurrection. They needed, as much as any other hard hearted unbeliever to be convinced of the reality of the miracle.

How they were convinced, Luke simply and graphically relates.

“Jesus himself drew near and went with them.” He said to them, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?” Then as they approached the village Jesus was about to go forward and leave them to reflect on the testimony of the prophets in the light of the actual death and the story of the resurrection they had heard from the women in the morning. “But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to abide with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them. He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight” or “ceased to be seen of them.”

We cannot but remark the artlessness and spontaneity of their action consequent upon their enlightenment. “They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and they that were with them saying, The Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread.”

If we receive Luke’s history of this journey as trustworthy, its candour and simplicity, as well as its anxious brevity, commend it to our judgment and secure its acceptance; but if we suppose it false, a series of problems at once comes forward demanding a reasonable elucidation.

Are we prepared to satisfy this demand? Can we explain the perplexity and hopelessness of Cleopas and his fellow traveller? Can we show a good reason for their momentary change of mind; for their immediate rising up and encountering another two hours’ walk back to Jerusalem which the same afternoon

they had quitted in ignorance and unbelief? Can we propound any rational theory to account for what happened soon after they entered the room where the eleven and others were assembled?

The frank enquirer will not endeavour to persuade himself that these queries are irrelevant, but will ask how, denying the resurrection of Jesus, he can satisfy his intellect with answers to them.

The conduct of Jesus as described by Luke, was just such as would be necessary to convince a number of plain, unsophisticated people who were almost frightened out of their senses, not knowing whether what they saw was an apparition or a real person. "And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and feet." Why He particularly invited them to inspect His hands and feet is too obvious to need comment: the nails had been driven through them, and the scars remained in the healed flesh.

These marks were precisely the tokens to identify the possessor and must ultimately bring conviction to the most obstinate and incredulous.

Note the impression they made upon the company present. "They believed not for joy and wonder." This is most touching. A great struggle was going on within; the facts before their eyes and within their grasp were suddenly overcoming their ignorant unbelief, and the delight of irresistible persuasion of victory over death was bursting through all bounds.

While filled with these mingled feelings, "Jesus said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honey comb. And he took and did eat before them." These were common articles of food, and the eating of them by Jesus, in addition to His exposure of His hands and feet, could not but confirm the privileged witnesses in the assurance that it was He Himself.

There was another incident, which could tend only to corroborate and ratify what had taken place in the presence of the Apostles and those that were with them. "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:24, 25).

Thomas was no visionary; he was not a man to be carried away by fervent imagination; nor was he to be quieted by the testimony of others. Thomas would have done honour to certain schools of modern scientists who are determined to believe as little as possible at second-hand, and to be satisfied only with their own personal and actual demonstrations.

But truth does not suffer from the Didymites; it is rather they themselves who miss some of its benefits.

Thomas was not content with the sight of his own eyes; he must put his "finger into the print of the nails" and thrust his "hand into his side," else he would "not believe." Our obdurate apostle had a week in which to nurse his unbelief, and one may infer that as the interval afforded no proof of his error, he would not be more inclined to yield to the testimony of his brethren.

But "after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

This Jewish Didymus was an incredulous person, but his incredulity did not equal that of the French Didymus, M. Renan. This learned professor and fascinating scribe would summon a commission to sit over a dead body; would summon the miracle-worker and witness the rising to life; having taken due precautions to secure the actual death of the subject. And if the dead were raised again in the presence of the scientific commission, what then? Would the French Didymus become a believer in the doctrine of the resurrection? By no means. He would institute a fresh commission and go through a second trial, and if this time the same result followed, would he not then be thoroughly satisfied?

Of No; and why not? Because these were only two cases, and all he would affirm is that resurrection had taken place in those two!

Persons not profoundly versed in the art of quibbling may wonder what use these commissions could possibly be; if the first trial was not conclusive why make a second; and if both failed to settle belief in the doctrine why make any trial at all?

What bars the road to truth against these men seems to be their pre-decision of the question; they lay it down that miracle does not and cannot happen, that it cannot and does not exist.

Any investigation therefore, which should lead to the admission of miracle is stigmatised as insufficient and consequently unreliable. Enquiry and reasoning are practically futile in such a case, for it is already prejudiced.

In his last chapter, John mentions other instances in which Jesus appeared to His disciples. On one occasion, Simon Peter, Thomas, called Didymus, Nathaniel, and sons of Zebedee, and other disciples, were out all night fishing, but caught nothing. In the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know He was there; on learning that they had not caught anything Jesus persuaded them to "cast the net on the right side of the ship." "They cast, therefore, and now were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes... As soon as they were come to land they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have caught... This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead."

In this narrative there is a simplicity, an acknowledgement of ignorance at first sight, which has no semblance of fabrication about it. If its truthfulness be denied the consequences are of the gravest; involving nothing less than mendacity of the Apostles whom Jesus loved.

The course pursued by the twelve after the departure of their Lord is indubitable testimony to their belief in His resurrection to life; it leaves absolutely no ground on which to frame an objection; whether they were mistaken is another point.

We can only judge of this by the nature of the evidence furnished.

If such would not be considered decisive to establish the resurrection, its value for the same purpose was not less two thousand years ago.

As far, then, as we have proceeded, the testimony amounts to this: that a large number of persons, not one of whom believed in, or even had any understanding of, the rising of Jesus from the dead, positively and repeatedly affirmed that they saw Him alive after His death and burial; that a number of them refused to accept the statement of several of their company to whom He first showed Himself; that one, viz., Thomas, averred his utter disbelief of the fact, although it was attended by many of his friends as eye-witnesses of it simultaneously; that Thomas himself was forced to yield credence to it on the evidence of his own sight and touch; that these people, who had known Jesus for some time before His death, ate and drank with Him again and again after He rose; that for forty days they were very much in His company, asking him questions and hearing Him speak, as before His death, "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" and finally, that "while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

Now let us suppose that the events here detailed had happened in our own day, where could we find a jury of twelve "good men and true" who would agree to reject the evidence; who would decide that the testimony was false; that the resurrection of Jesus was not established by it?

Further, let us assume that such evidence is not trustworthy; a question next presents itself with which we are bound to deal, whether agreeable to us or not: that is, What sort of evidence would be considered conclusive?

The reply will be either in support of what is called circumstantial evidence, or of ocular demonstration, or of both.

But does not the evidence produced answer to all this? Does it not consist of circumstances on the part of the slayers of Jesus, highly favourable to the truth of His resurrection? Why did they not deny it by producing the body? Why did they circulate a rumour which bore its own refutation on the face of it; that a few unarmed peasants had rolled away a “very great” stone, and, in the teeth of their Roman guard, had carried off the dead Jesus? And why, if they really believed that His disciples stole Him, did they not adopt measures to compel them to deliver Him up, and at once to disprove His resurrection?

Thus much, in brief, for the circumstantial evidence to the fact.

But what we say of the evidence of the senses in the case; of sight, touch, hearing; or prolonged intercourse?

If this is inadequate, how in the world of humanity would it be possible to find aught worthy of the name of evidence; aught, in fact, which would command belief? What avails it to say, as Renan does, miracle is inadmissible; we do not contend that it is impossible; but we maintain that it is not proved.

Very plausible, truly; a good way of evading the troublesome consequences of a plain denial of the possibility of miracle – but what is it worth? If miracle had never been confirmed by evidence, can we trust the experiments of any scientist; can we accept the statements on oath of any witness?

Is not the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus equal in clearness, variety, and solidity to any evidence ever adduced? Is it not the very kind of evidence which sets at rest all doubt in events of regular occurrence and great moment?

There yet remains other proof. We allude to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

There was nothing about Saul which would be likely to render him an easy object of illusion in this matter.

He had been well acquainted with the Christians, and was exceeding mad against them.

Saul was a remarkably intelligent and zealous Pharisee, and it was in the very height of his zeal for the law and determination to crush the new heresy that the great change came; a change which has made him pre-eminent among Christian Apostles, and covered him with unending fame.

The honesty of Paul’s conduct is so striking that no writer who has had occasion to notice him has suffered it to escape his eye. If we suppose Paul to have been for a time deceived by some trick of art; by the excitement of his mind; or by alarm at some natural phenomenon, as a thunderstorm, this would not afford satisfactory reason for his protracted and undoubting tenacity.

Before the termination of such a career as his, there were abundant causes to lead to the discovery of the error. But we find his faith strengthening; his enthusiasm and certainty heightening and deepening as he nears the oft far-shadowed ignominious and horrible death.

He, who for a long while had disbelieved a number of his fellow countrymen, at last saw the Lord Jesus and heard His voice; he was also smitten and remained blind for three days. Nothing could ever after this shake the faith of Saul. He joined his own experience to that of the others; that Christ was “seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and, last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”

Paul’s account of these incidents in his letter to the Galatians carries with it great weight.

“Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.” To the Corinthians, who seemed to be doubting his authority, he said, “Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?” It is not conceivable that the faintest breath of suspicion can rest on Paul’s belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

It is the most prominent feature in his preaching; the most powerful arm he wields against Platonism; if Jesus did not rise, his whole mission is a lie, and the end of all men is that they PERISH.

Was Paul mad, as Festus affirmed? Was it possible that in all this he was deceived? If so, then no man is, or can be, safe in judging by means of his God-given faculties for judgment – the sight of his eyes, and the hearing of his ears.

In conclusion, we come to existing facts; to a mountain whose base was laid in the days of Jesus, and whose summit towers aloft in our own view.

This is incontestable, and demands an explanation at the mouth of every intelligent man who has no belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Let him not reply that this is no concern of his; with such an answer not even himself can be content.

He knows the universally alleged cause of this mighty uprise; of this intellectual, and to a vast extent, moral revolution in the world; he knows that two thousand years backward would place us prior to its birth – and the question presses – it will press - what is the meaning of all this, if I deny that Jesus rose from the dead? Here perplexity sets in; for whether we think is true or false, the belief of it, and that alone, was the origin and sustaining power of the whole movement.

According to some it is of no moment whether Jesus in the body was raised or not; it would suffice to believe that in soul He appeared to His disciples; that in soul He still lives.

The futile notion scarce merits a formal confutation.

What shall we say to the surprise of His disciples at finding the tomb empty, if such were the foundation of their faith, and the energy of the mission?

In this view there would have been no cause for surprise; no ground for rejoicing at victory over death; no motive for faith in a general resurrection of the dead; no sense whatever in hanging their claims upon the resurrection of the crucified body as upon a nail fastened in a sure place.

On the contrary the Egyptians and Pythagoras would have been in the right; and the mockery of the Athenians deservedly provoked by Paul's preaching.

It will always be difficult, or rather impossible, to satisfy certain thinkers of the utility of the resurrection of the body so long as it is maintained that the soul apart from the body is capable of thousands of years of heavenly felicity. To bliss ineffable and enduring a body could bring no advantage; the union must therefore be superfluous.

Edward Turney.

Once again, we are including a selection of 'Posts' which we have placed on a Christadelphian Internet Forum.

It will be noted that there is less prejudice to our writings in this form of communication and indeed many are enquiring after our understanding and finding they are sympathetic towards our views, even to the rejecting of Clause 5 amongst others.

In a discussion on the Atonement, an interested enquirer writes:

"I'm looking at how the 'Clean Flesh' beliefs (for want of a better word) can be reconciled to the present-day Christadelphian stance on the nature of human flesh. I know this subject has been discussed all over the place but if Russell will be kind enough to accommodate my wishes then I would like to spend some (hopefully) more serious and in-depth time on the

subject. I am certain I will learn a lot from it and who knows perhaps we might come to a common ground unless Russell convinces me otherwise.”

In response I wrote:

Dear X, Thank you for your post. Yes, the term ‘clean flesh’ I believe was invented by Robert Roberts but I may be mistaken in this. It was never used by Edward Turney though he did use the term ‘unclean flesh’ in his reply to “The Slain Lamb.”

To each of your points 1 to 7, I will put our counterpart, first by quoting your point, followed by ours with a few observations:

1) Bro X:- As an outcome of the first transgression Adam and Eve brought into the world a changed state in the human condition.

Russell:- As an outcome of the first transgression Adam and Eve were alienated from God. They were no longer His children having sold themselves to Sin as their master. This so called changed state in human nature is an invention of Rome - see for example Article Nine of the C of E Thirty-Nine Articles.

2) Bro X:- We are all subject to this condition called ‘sin’ and therefore we all ‘die’ seeing that ‘death is the wages of sin’. And yet in the beginning we were neither ‘mortal’ nor immortal’.

Russell:- We are all born into the alienated position of being sold under sin, or concluded under sin. Natural death is not the wages of sin. The second death is the wages of sin and this is the death Jesus saves us from.

3) Bro X:- Christ was of our nature and therefore he too had the sin nature.

Russell:- Christ was of our identical nature.

4) Bro. X:- Christ was foreordained by God to die a sacrificial death.

Russell:- Christ was “slain from the foundation of the world” - “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” It was Jesus own free choice to lay down His life for His friends - to redeem them from the second death. I.e. He made them free from the Law of Sin and Death. Jesus could not have done this unless He was free from the Law of Sin and Death when He went to the Cross.

5) Bro. X:- He therefore had to die - it was God’s plan.

Russell:- It was Jesus free choice to die - “Therefore doth my Father love me.” “Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends” - “I lay down my life of myself, no man taketh it from me.” And neither did God take it from Him. “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” God, in His foreknowledge, knew what Jesus would do, but it was not God’s will that Jesus should be killed. Here we see the great distinction between God’s will and God’s purpose. Jesus did God’s will in laying down His life; the Jews and Romans carried forward God’s purpose - which God allowed them to do - for our sakes.

6) Bro. X:- Christ though ‘sinless’ in acts benefited from his own death as well as us.

Russell:- Christ was sinless and need not have died. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” Jesus died for us, not for Himself. The Scriptures tell us many, many times that Jesus died for us and never once in the Scriptures do we read that He died for Himself. The benefit Jesus gained from his sacrifice was “to bring many sons to glory” and thereby He would not “abide alone.”

7) Bro. X:- Through his death Christ was resurrected to ‘glory’ and is perfect both in character and body. In this state the ‘corrupt’ flesh nature was eliminated.

Russell:- Jesus was resurrected to glory. Those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and do not need to die for this change to take place. Neither did Jesus

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to reply to your points and I do not think they are overly simplistic but that Christadelphian writings are generally overly complicated.

There is no way that the two views can ever come together. We believe our views follow on from the teachings of Dr Thomas. It is well known that he asked God to guide him into all truth when his life hung in the balance. I believe God answered that prayer but not all at once. It took Dr Thomas until his dying day to find the complete picture and this is where Edward Turney went on from. Sadly, Robert Roberts did a complete somersault by going back to Dr Thomas's earlier teachings which had been superseded.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

* * * * *

In a discussion about our beliefs, I was asked if Jesus had not been put to death, would He have eventually died? To which I replied:-

Dear Bro. Y, Thank you for your post regarding Jesus, where you ask, "If he continued living do you acknowledge that he would have died?"

As you say, we are here considering a hypothetical situation, yet I find many such situations not only interesting but also helpful in understanding the ways of God.

So, with regard to Jesus, yes, He was of corruptible nature like Adam and the rest of us, and indeed like all the animal creation, all have corruptible flesh. Had Jesus gone on living a corruptible life, I do not see how it could have continued indefinitely. No corruptible life ever has – the body wears out and sooner or latter it dies. It was not designed to live for ever.

But may I enlarge my personal view here?

If we go back to Adam, I believe we see that he was put on probation for eternal life subject to obedience to keeping God's commands. If this is right, then I do not see that such a time of probation would have lasted over an extensive period; perhaps just long enough to see that Adam was determined to do the will of God and to appreciate Him as a loving Father whom he wished to please.

At such a time, I would think, God would have granted him immortality. I cannot imagine God would have left Adam on probation for the 930 years that he actually lived had he shown such love and determination to do God's will.

However, such a situation never came to be and we can only surmise. What actually happened was that Adam transgressed, his life was spared and I see that he was placed on a second probation under different circumstances. No longer on probation through perfect obedience but through faith.

Coming now to Jesus, I see that He too was in a similar position to the first Adam in as much as He was on probation for eternal life subject to perfect obedience. I also think there is a verse in Scripture which tells us He reached the time when God would have granted Him eternal life without going to Calvary.

I understand this may seem highly speculative to many but in Luke 9:51 we read "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up into heaven..." - I suggest this may have been the moment when His probation was ended, but instead of being received up into heaven at that time, "he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" to complete the task He had set Himself as being our sin-offering.

I put this forward as food for thought.

I would just say here that the death that came by sin was not natural death but judicial death. Else what did the sacrifice of Jesus achieve as we still die?

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

* * * * *

Dear Julian, Thank you for this update. There are many who, over the last one hundred and thirty years, have striven hard to awaken the Christadelphian community to the errors in their doctrine and would weep with joy to read some of the posts on this forum.

Yes, the Nazarene Fellowship have been accused of strong language at times and of personal attacks on occasions, but truly these have been warranted in every case and I know of the restraint writers have had to exercise not to go further. It is very difficult to hold oneself back when one sees lies taught as truth.

While many no longer believe that Jesus died for Himself and that He did not have defiled flesh yet they have only a hazy idea of why He did die. When we consider the volumes written by Christadelphians on the subject of the Atonement; the complex arguments, sometimes contradicted by later writers who hold different complex ideas, we can only wonder at the imagination of those writers who try so hard to build on the sandy foundation of the B.A.S.F. In contrast, the article put out by the Nazarenes is short, yet comprehensive and to the point, and consists of about 1500 words! It is not a complex matter at all.

Indeed, why should the truth be suppressed? Why should Brethren and Sisters of good conscience not be allowed to express their concerns openly? There is a saying that "Truth sees no lion in the path" yet Christadelphians seem fearful of allowing freedom of exchange of ideas.

We all need to seek prayerful guidance in using our freedom wisely.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

* * * * *

In a discussion regarding an early 'Statement of Faith' expressed by Dr Thomas, I wrote:-

Dear All, I think it is worth noting that this statement of Dr John Thomas's beliefs is dated 1867. This was four years before he died in March 1871. The significance for me is that by this time he was consolidating his views and teaching regarding his understanding of 'flesh,' by opposing the widespread Christadelphian belief in the changed flesh of Adam at the fall.

The consequence of this is that Jesus did not die for Himself as is the required belief by candidates for baptism according to the Statement of Faith.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

* * * * *

During a discussion on "Guilt by Association" I wrote:-

Dear all, As editor of the Nazarene Fellowship magazine it is with a little anxiety that I contribute to this discussion not wishing to stir up ill feelings, yet having observed the reaction of some Christadelphians towards us and the things we stand for I feel some comment here may help.

I believe the root cause of 'guilt by association' stems from two things - an unwillingness to face up to ones own situation, and a lack of trust of other peoples intentions. No one wants to be at fault and will defend their views or actions because they believe them to be right. If they are challenged the first reaction it to defend ones self. Because such people feel insecure of their own position they are going to find fault with others wherever they can. "If you are associating with so and so, then it's no wonder you believe such rubbish" (or "I don't want anything to do with you").

For over a hundred and twenty-five years, we have been vilified and ostracised by some Christadelphians because we have found faults in some of their teachings, which they are just not prepared to stand up to.

Please allow me to give one simple example.

If we have sin dwelling in our flesh which makes us inevitable sinners (which is the official Christadelphian teaching), then we might just as well blame a child born blind for not being able to see.

Sadly, there are many who will not accept this simple logic and are committed to the belief that Robert Roberts's statement of faith reflects Bible Truth. The trouble is that the Christadelphian 'establishment,' feel at all costs the 'status quo' must be maintained. Every magazine editor is under an obligation to refuse publication of critical views. At the 1975 Jersey City Conference the editors of the three principle magazines permitted on ecclesial bookstands, "The Christadelphian," "The Tidings" and "The Logos," all agreed the resolution:

"We believe that the Birmingham Amended Statement of faith is a true definition of the first principles of the oracles of God and that these doctrines are to be believed and taught by us without reservation. Fellowship to be extended only to those who agree thereto."

I put this forward only to illustrate where I believe this 'guilt by association' stems from - the willing blindness of the few who insist they alone are right. It is a very sad situation for any denomination to find themselves in and I wish it could be resolved, but alas, I can't see it happening before Jesus returns.

May He come very soon. With Love in Him to all. Russell.

* * * * *

During a lengthy discussion about the amount of knowledge required before baptism I wrote:-

"What must I do to be saved?" Indeed saved from what? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Saved unto eternal life - by breaking free of the condemnation in Adam.

How much was explained to him is not specifically stated of course, except that "they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house."

So we can be sure that the word of the Lord that was spoken to them explained what baptism was all about - the need to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptised into His death - to rise up from that baptism in newness of life. A new life to free them from condemnation that had been in their life, a life which was now passed, a life in which there had been no hope of a future life. Whether or not the law of sin and death was explained we know not - a law which was done away in Jesus, but it is part of the gospel.

No doubt the word of the Lord would teach them that they were now no longer 'in Adam' but 'in Christ' - they were dependant upon His love and grace - Jesus Christ who asked them and us to follow a new commandment - to love one another even as He has loved us. Such a thing had never been done in the history of the world that a man lay down His life for His friends so that they can be free from the law of sin and death - no longer under condemnation but with a life that can lead to eternal life through keeping such a commandment.

The Law of Love we should call it. What a joy it should be to us. There is one word which encapsulates this Love, and it is 'forgiveness.' We are grafted into the Tree (of Life?) and so long as we remain grafted in we have hope of the promise of life for evermore.

I would think that if this much was accepted then a request for baptism ought to be accepted.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

* * * * *

In another discussion I had occasion to write:

Dear All, We all know that Jesus gave His life for the sheep. His life was His own possession and as the Son of God He had a promised inheritance awaiting Him. He could not give His life for others if it was not His own to do with as He wished.

To say that He would have sinned if He had not laid down His life for His friends will not stand up to scrutiny. It was never the command that He should lay down His life. John 10:18 is used by some to add weight to such an argument but it is unconvincing. If Jesus had been commanded to lay down His life then He could not have said "I lay it down of myself." It was His own choice - of His own free will.

If we say that Jesus gave His life freely for us then it cannot be true that He had to give it; that it was required of Him; that it was necessary for His own benefit or for His own salvation. We cannot have it both ways. There was the benefit for us, and this is the joy that was set before Him - to bring many sons to glory.

Scripture teaches that Jesus gave His life for us and no one should attach conditions. Jesus did not have to die, though He was of corruptible nature which was not designed to live for ever. Our time of probation is our natural life span. That does not mean it was the same for Jesus, nor will it be for those who are alive when Jesus returns - as the Son of God He was in a special position and not concluded under the sin of Adam. He was under the Law, but as He never broke that Law, He was never concluded under it as are all the descendants of Adam.

We are all very thankful to Jesus for His determination, courage and strength of character, as we are for His great, abounding Love.

You say, Julian, that you have never heard any one say that Jesus was not mortal. I think most people today use the word 'mortal' in the sense of 'corruptible.' However, I think Scripture uses 'mortal' as a legal term meaning 'subject to death per law,' while 'corruptible' is a physical term referring to our nature, and not ours only, but to all living organisms on this earth. As Jesus had a free life - a life not concluded under the sin of Adam, then I would say He was not mortal. I would also say that Adam before the fall was not mortal but became mortal when he transgressed the commandment. Then his life became subject to death per law, but this was not so with Jesus. (Dr Thomas also held this view).

I agree wholeheartedly that our lives should reflect our love for Jesus. Correct doctrine is important but we must also live our lives well pleasing to our Creator. "But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Spirit, referring to the way we live our lives; truth referring to true doctrine. Let us make sure we are not among those of whom Jesus says "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9).

With Love to all. Russell.

* * * * *

On the subject of the Judgment Seat:-

Dear All, What Judgment is this?

If you are referring to the Judgment Seat at Christ's return then all those present are already accepted or they wouldn't be there.

"Blessed and Holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

Clauses 24 and 25 of the B.A.S.F. are in gross error for they contradict Revelation 20. We can also accept 1 Corinthians 15:35-44 to mean what it says rather than trying to ignore it as in Christadelphian seminars "Reading the Bible Effectively" or else trying to explain it away pretending it means something else.

What we should be more concerned about is being left behind when the righteous are called to the Judgment Seat of Christ; when one is taken and the other left as in the parables in Matthew 24:40 - "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. There shall be two grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

Don't be misled by the B.A.S.F. Believe Scripture instead.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

* * * * *

Regarding a note on Sacrifices, I asked Brother Phil Parry if he would kindly answer a point raised in another post:-

Dear Bro M, As I mentioned to you in an e-mail, I recently came upon this thread on sacrifice and hoped to put forward some alternative ideas for consideration. However, I have not had time to do the matter justice and so asked Brother Phil Parry if he would like to make some notes. I sent him a copy of your posts and drew particular attention to the following paragraph where you wrote:-

"One more thought. It is because of concepts such as the Micah reference, where it definitely (and more clearly in other places) tells us that human sacrifice is not permitted that many Jews find hard. They know God would not break His own rule and offer up his son "as a human sacrifice". This is the wrong way to look at the words that speak of sacrifice. For it was "Jesus" who made the sacrifice of his entire life to "do what is written of (him) in the role of the book." But this sacrifice brought him "to" his death, not that the method of death has any "saving qualities" as defined in Scripture; it was his dying to his temptations that mattered."

Before posting his reply may I introduce Brother Phil to our readers by saying that he was a Christadelphian for 18 years and discovered for himself through prayerful study some errors in official Christadelphian teaching - and so was asked to leave. It was a short while after this that he came across the Nazarene Fellowship and discovered that what he had found coincided with their understanding of Scripture and has since that time written hundreds of articles for their magazine.

Here is what Bro. Phil writes in answer to Bro. M:-

"Bro. M's statement on Adam and Eve, "They did not as yet allow their thinking to separate them from God"; yet Eve's thinking did not separate her from God, it was her violation of God's Law which did this and incurred the 'judicial death by sin,' not a change of nature, but the shedding of blood wherein was the life which kept alive a natural corruptible 'God-created' body.

The losing of this was not a sacrifice but a debt to the Law. Adam sold his birthright as a created Son of God by becoming a servant to Sin in need of purchase to make him free from the law of Sin and death. The debt owed was the LIFE IN THE BLOOD.

This was the debt Jesus paid – not his whole character of experience in a life lasting 33½ years in which the laying down of life in the blood was not a contract of that obedience but a delight to do the will of His Father. No compulsion to die.

None can dismiss the sacrificial death of Christ as being associated with the dispensation from Eden to the present time, such as, for example what enabled the continued life of Adam

and Eve (Shedding of blood in Eden); The Passover Lamb which freed the Jews from bondage; Christ our Passover sacrificed for Jews and Gentiles. (Isaiah 53). The celebration of the Jewish Day of Atonement under Moses law is ended. Hebrews 10:11-26. No more remembrance of sins every year, “their sins and iniquities I will remember no more”; “a new and living way” by the blood of Jesus.

For present day Jews under the old covenant to celebrate the Day of Atonement is to reject Yahshua the Messiah and the Son of God even the Prophet God raised up like unto Moses that they should hearken unto.

We who are known as Nazarenes believe that Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for ever and we remember it in the Passover of Bread and Wine Jesus introduced to His disciples, the angel of death has by the blood of Christ passed over without effect. As the Apostle Paul said, “The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death he associated himself with the blood of God’s firstborn; Yahshua.

Bro. M speaks of the life and conduct of Jesus and sacrifice meaning the giving up of something which he implies led to His death. But should not His whole life and conduct have been the way of proving that it was possible to be obedient to the Creator and His Law that God might be just in condemning sin? And did not Jesus resist all temptation and remain sinless without dying? And did not His whole being have to conform to the antitypical Lamb of God which taketh away the Sin of the world by Adam?

We cannot accept His death as martyrdom though there is a similarity. Many like St Paul can be said to have suffered martyrdom, but without the sacrifice of Christ, nothing was gained and even though Paul said he had suffered the loss of all things, he counted that as but dung that he might be found ‘in Christ.’ (Philippians 3:7-14). And to be ‘in Christ was to know why He died on Calvary and to be baptised into His death. (Romans 6:3-10).

It is important to note the words of God in Jeremiah 7:21-23, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers nor commanded them in the day I brought them out of Egypt concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this commanded I them saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all my ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” (Leviticus 26:3).

I would not call a delight to do the will of God a sacrifice, but a pleasure, and to Him a sweet-smelling savour, but for a sinless man to lay down His life by an agonising death of crucifixion not due to Himself but for the salvation of all men, this is a sacrifice only those who know God and His Son can comprehend.

The only sacrificial offerings to God were those in which the death of Christ was seen by faith and had their origin from the Garden of Eden, and nowhere in scripture do we find a human priest laying down his life for himself or for others. What the high Priest offered under the Mosaic Law was a slain lamb – a male of the first year without spot and blemish like unto the lamb in Eden that foreshadowed the sacrificial death of Jesus. It was a conscience cleansing to fit him to offer for the people. Jesus was not in this position – He was not a Priest on earth; He was the victim. Hebrews 8. Animals of blemished flesh and also legally unclean were not to be offered. They did not foreshadow Christ. It was human life which had been forfeited while related to God; it was an unforfeited life related to God which could only pay the debt owed to the law.

Jesus offered Himself without spot to God before He willingly died on Calvary that God might allow one in the equivalent nature of the man that sinned in Eden, to pay the debt owed to the law. God did not slay His Son, the Jews and Romans did this. God allowed it for our sakes. (Romans 8:32; Hebrews 9:13-16).

Having completed and fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, it must be strange and contradictory for people such as Christadelphians to believe in a future material Temple in Jerusalem re-introducing the rituals of sacrifice performed under the Mosaic Law calling them retrospective while the true substance and antitype is present in Glory and Witness of that achieved once and for all.

Bro. M seems to be in opposition to this view as Nazarenes are, so he will not be very popular with them apart from what he says about Christ's sacrifice.

Brother Phil Parry

The Battle Within

One evening a Cherokee elder told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, "My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The elder Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."