

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 226

July/August 2007

## In this Issue:

Page 1	Editorial	Sister Helen Brady
Page 2	The Sting of Sin is The Law	Brother Phil Parry
Page 3	Exhortation – This freedom	Brother A. Hodges
Page 4	News from The Middle East	From Internet sources
Page 7	“Christadelphians – The Untold Story”...?	Sister Helen Brady
Page 7	Some Comments on Edward Turney’s Question and other matters from the last Circular Letter	Brother Phil Parry
Page 9	Exhortation – The Abuse of Understanding	Brother B.D.Lewis
Page 11	From Forum Posts	
Page 27	Reply to a Sister	Brother Russell Gregory

---

## Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends, Loving greetings.

It is only the Fourth Gospel that mentions Nicodemus, the Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin or Great Council. John describes Nicodemus’s meeting with Jesus, a meeting that took place by night, possibly in the Garden of Gethsemane as this was Jesus’ regular meeting place with his disciples on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city. Nicodemus was an important ecclesiastic and as such he was typically cautious and diplomatic. He must have known Jesus at least by reputation and he was obviously impressed enough to want to meet him face to face. John begins to tell of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, but the conversation soon develops into a discourse by Jesus without any record of a response from Nicodemus. But the fact that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, attended after the crucifixion, to Jesus body and burial reveals the impact of the meeting on Nicodemus.

Nicodemus begins his talk with Jesus with a sincere but diplomatic compliment, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God: for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.” Diplomacy is out of place and so is an admiration for Jesus’ powerful signs. Jesus promptly cuts him short sweeping his compliment aside and striking at the root of Nicodemus’s problem. Only one thing matters and that is a new start for anyone longing for the kingdom of God. “Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Greek words mean both “born anew” and “born from above.” Nicodemus had inherited a long tradition as a Pharisee. He had tested his tradition in a life of experience, disciplining his conduct, speech and thinking. How could he now break away from all this to begin again? Which is why he asked “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus replied “Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you. You must be born anew. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone that is born of the Spirit.” The Spirit was like the desert wind, a powerful unseen force, no one knowing where it came from or where it would go.

To Nicodemus the words “born of water” must surely have implied the baptism of John the Baptist in the River Jordan., but the words of Jesus must have made things very difficult for a Pharisee, for God had given the Law; devout men had drawn up in great detail its application. God had made a covenant with his people to be carefully kept. Any talk of an unpredictable wind was destructive of institutional religion, so Nicodemus said to Jesus, “How can this be?” And Jesus answered: “Truly, truly I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? And as Moses

lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up.” And with this first prediction of his death, the account of the meeting of Nicodemus with Jesus fades into the meditation of the writer.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry his credentials as Messiah were constantly questioned, His place of birth, His ancestry, and His message. The officers of the Council brought back reports of His teaching and signs much impressed by Him. “No man ever spoke like this man.” The Pharisees and priests, however, poured scorn upon them as deceived and the crowds as credulous and ignorant of the Law. “Are you led astray, you also? Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, who do not know the Law, are accursed.”

It was at this point that Nicodemus, still concealing his loyalties, postpones judgment on a matter of legal principle. “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” At which his fellow Pharisees asked whether he was also a Galilean because he sympathized with this Galilean upstart.

It could not be clearer from this account of Nicodemus’s encounter with Jesus and from Jesus own words, how important baptism is. Furthermore baptism of an adult capable of comprehending and fully appreciating its true meaning. There is no room for infant sprinkling here.

Finally Nicodemus appears with Joseph of Arimathea at the burial of Jesus. Joseph had bravely begged the body from Pilate to ensure a decent burial. It is Nicodemus who brought a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes to embalm the body of Jesus, to be bound in linen cloths with the spices as is the burial custom of the Jews. “Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.”

We are not told if Nicodemus was ever baptized or the extent and depth of his discipleship, but we may suppose that like many other incomplete events written in the Bible, their conclusion will be revealed one day.

“He healeth the broken hearted, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of stars: he calleth them by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” Psalm 147v3-5.

Love to all. Helen Brady

---

## **The Strength of Sin is The Law**

It is marvellous how thoughts come to mind when reading 1 Corinthians 15 verses 50 to 57.

I believe St Paul is teaching something altogether different from what some people think. As I see it he is teaching that as flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in that it is everlasting and stands for ever with God, all in all it is necessary to be in a preparatory state in relation to it before one can be raised incorruptible from sleep in Christ and changed to incorruption if in Him at His coming. Paul uses the words “must put on.” A person unconscious in the earth cannot do this so putting on is a responsibility when alive and this Paul makes very plain in his epistle.

“The sting of death is sin.” If you think Paul means natural death is the result of sin this is not what he is teaching for it would mean sin was in the world as Adam’s creation subject to death before law entered.

All creation was subject to decay and death as God’s appointment. One would think that obedience to the law would make a person righteous and heir to eternal life, how then could Paul say that the law was the strength of sin? Again he says, “If there had been a law given that 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” (Galatians 3:21,22). Where is this Jew Robert Roberts speaks of in his “Slain Lamb” lecture – I will quote his words: “If there had been a Jew who had kept the law in all things having done the will of the Father from the beginning of life to the end of it, he would have been in the very position of the Lord Jesus himself. It would have been in his power by dying to cleanse himself from Adamic condemnation and his righteousness would have caused his resurrection from the dead.”

Now pause and think. Concerning the righteousness which is in the law Paul says he was blameless, so in fact according to Robert Roberts this would guarantee his resurrection from the dead having no need of Jesus Christ but on a par with Him. Reading Paul’s epistle to Philippians chapter 3, verses 6 to 14 I think not, for Paul says he is doing all he can to attain to the resurrection from the dead which involves pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Jesus fulfilled the types and shadows of Himself from Eden to Calvary thus abolishing the death that came by Adam’s sin, the very sins which the law made to abound as the offence. See Romans 5:20. Under the law of Moses the Day of Atonement caused a remembrance of sin every year, so the strength of sin was the law which made the Adamic sin to be mindful and that Jesus Christ was the only answer for Redemption and Salvation from the imputation of sin and death passed upon all men; not for personal sin but that they might, in the appointed way made known to them in the Word of God, be made righteous.

This is the object of St Paul’s teaching in Romans especially his teaching that natural death is not the sting of Sin but the result of being corruptible in nature.

Jesus did not abolish natural death but that sin of Adam which had the power of death by the shedding of blood, the first death which Jesus abolished and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power.” The power of the death by sin was provisionally taken away or covered by the lamb slain to produce that covering but was ratified by the blood of Christ at the God appointed time on Calvary. Thus Adam lived 930 years, the limit of his corruptible nature. Abel’s offering of the lamb in recognition of the one slain in the place of Adam also showed his faith in God’s provision of His Son, for his own shed blood cried out to God from the ground in a voice, as we read “Him being dead yet speaketh” meaning Abel was alive unto God, not by works but by faith shown by works. If the substitutional death of Jesus is not seen here, then blindness and stubbornness is the only reason.

May the Lord bless your understanding of His Word of Truth.

Phil and Rene Parry, humble commoners.

---

## **Exhortation**

### **“This freedom”.**

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

I think you will agree that “freedom,” as it is understood by the world at large, is impossible. We hear of the freedom of the individual, of the right of the individual to freedom, and the much spoken of “Four Freedoms;” but has there ever been any real freedom from oppression of some kind in the history of the world?

Looking at the world of today we find this freedom further away than ever. Wherever we look in the world today we find people bound and fettered by either political, economic, financial, or social laws, all brought about to keep man in subjection to that great monster – “Mammon;” the god of Greed and Power and Health.

How then, can we obtain “freedom”?

There is, of course, only one way, and that is God’s way; for there is no freedom apart from Him, and the only way to find it is by reading His Word. “Thy Word is Truth,” said the Lord Jesus, when praying for the Apostles (John 17:17), and so, let us turn to the Word of God.

In John 8:31 we read these words spoken by the Lord Jesus: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the Truth shall make you free.”

Then we go on to verse 36: “If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

There then, is real freedom, freedom from all fear, from all the powers of evil in this world, and above all freedom from Death.

In the Word of God we read of the Great Love of God through His Son Jesus Christ, and we read of His great and precious promises to those who love Him, and strive to obey Him. To those who read and believe comes that “perfect freedom,” freedom from all the powers of evil, and inheritors of all the promises for good, which God has promised through His Beloved Son.

Let us, then, gird up our loins, be strong in the faith, fight the good fight, and by the great mercy of God we shall inherit all things.

With Love and best wishes to all Brothers and Sisters,

Your Brother in Christ, A. Hodges.

---

## **News From the Middle East**

### **“Every man’s sword against his brother” – Ezekiel 38:21**

During the last week of July the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Jordan visited the Prime Minister of Israel to re-open and discuss peace plans based on the “Arab peace Initiative of 2002. The Jordanian Foreign Minister said “This is a visit that comes in accordance with the mandate given to us by the Arab committee assigned by the Arab summit to follow up on the Arab Peace Initiative... We are here today to present to the Israeli government, the Israeli people and the Israeli parliament this collective Arab peace offer in order to reach a permanent and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on a two-state solution and on the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including east Jerusalem, and of reaching agreement with Israel, Syria and Lebanon based on returning territories occupied since 1967.” He continued that this offer “constitutes a major opportunity of historic magnitude. It will provide Israel with the security, recognition and acceptance in this region, which Israel has long aspired to.” He also said that this peace initiative has been endorsed by the vast majority of the Muslim countries, members of the Organization of Islamic Conference, including more than 50 Muslim countries and 22 Arab countries. He continued, “The initiative will make Israel part of this region and will enable our people and the entire region to look forward with hope and devote their energy and efforts to achieve growth and prosperity and advance the improvement of life of all in this region.”

This Arab Peace Initiative also calls for the return to Israel of Palestinian refugees and their descendants.

During the talks, Israeli leaders told the visiting Jordanian and Egyptian ministers that they would like to see more public support from Arab governments for the significant gestures Israel has taken over the last few weeks toward the Palestinians in which Israel had released 255 Palestinian prisoners, granted ‘amnesty’

to about 180 others and made regular transfer of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority. It was made clear that public Arab acknowledgement of these moves was important in building Israeli public opinion in favour of the diplomatic process.

Others also seemed to be taken in by Arab rhetoric. After a 2 day visit to Damascus, the Danish Foreign Minister urged the West to exert pressure to help bring about peace in the Middle East and said that Syria was willing to be part of the solution. Apparently the Danish Foreign Minister had been persuaded by talks with President Assad and other officials of their sincerity. On the other hand one commentator later expressed his view that "Normal Ties with the Arab World" would mean Arabs take all; land, money, control over Jerusalem until they have unconditional surrender and give nothing, absolutely nothing in return. The only Jews left would be slaves to do their bidding.

Not since 1973, has Israel faced such a large number of threats. Many believe they are heading toward a number of major military conflicts in the coming year, possibly even in the next few months. Syria is in the midst of an unprecedented weapons shopping spree and making final preparations for war. Iran is racing toward nuclear power and, if not stopped, might obtain a nuke by as early as 2009. Hamas has established an enemy Islamic state five minutes south of Ashkelon, and al-Qaida has declared Israel as one of its primary targets for the coming year. The timeline for these wars is still vague, but senior officers warned of growing enemy strength and a continuous deterioration of the Israeli Defence Force's level of deterrence. Israel's level of deterrence in the eyes of its enemies began declining in May 2000, following the unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon; dropped again with the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, which was perceived as a victory for Islamic terror. In 2006, the deterrence again suffered a heavy blow with the failure to destroy Hizbullah during the Second Lebanon War, and it continues to decline with America's failure to stabilize the situation in Iraq.

What is clear is that Syria is preparing for war and will be ready in the coming months. It has beefed up its military presence along the border and, has purchased advanced anti-tank missiles and other platforms which it believes can help it defeat the Israel Defence Force. According to Military Intelligence's assessment, if Prime Minister Olmert does not begin peace negotiations with Damascus, the country could find itself at war with Syria, a conflict that would be at least 10 times worse than last summer's conflict with Hizbullah.

According to Israel Defence Force assessments, Syria is not at present interested in an armed conflict but has been preparing for war. Hizbullah is still in the process of rebuilding itself. It has recently received hundreds of medium-range rockets from Syria along with the most advanced weaponry from Iran, the assumption being that any weapon small enough to fit into a shipping container has been sent to the guerrilla group. Israeli Military Intelligence believes that Hizbullah will have completed its rehabilitation by the summer of next year and will again be ready for war. Though the presence of UNIFIL and the Lebanese army makes it difficult for Hizbullah to operate freely in the South, the Israel Defence Force claims that it has just moved its missile array farther north, still in range of Israel but out of range of UNIFIL detection.

Israel is growing increasingly concerned with the internal political situation inside Lebanon. Prime Minister Saniora's government has been paralyzed since Nasrallah ordered the Hizbullah ministers to resign last November. While Jerusalem is impressed with Saniora - particularly with his decision to send troops to fight Fatah al-Islam in the fortified refugee camp near Tripoli - it is waiting to see how he emerges from the next round with Hizbullah and other pro-Syrian factions in the government on September 25 when the parliament is scheduled to appoint a new president.

Israeli Military Intelligence expects Iran to have mastered the necessary technology to proceed independently with its nuclear program by the end of the year. In 2 or 3 years Iran will have a nuclear bomb, unless it is stopped before then. Deeply involved in tracking Iran's nuclear program, Israeli Military Intelligence is working to identify and pinpoint targets in the event a military strike is launched against its nuclear facilities. It recently established a new division, headed by Brig. Gen. Nitzan Alon, former commander of the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit, which is responsible for translating intelligence into real targets and information that can be used by operating units.

It is believed that Israel's deterrence is based on three factors: its strategic partnership with the US; nuclear capabilities it is believed to possess; and its regular military capabilities. Since the Second Lebanon War, the partnership with the US has been dramatically enhanced, most recently during Prime Minister Olmert's visit to Washington, when President George W. Bush agreed to increase foreign military aid by more than \$1 billion.

The Israeli air force is considered as one of the best in the world, particularly after its major accomplishments during the war with Hizbullah last year in hunting and destroying missile and rocket launchers. But, according to Yadlin, the primary way to test Israel's level of deterrence is to see if its enemies are doing something that they have not done in the past.

Hamas is currently not acting against Israel because it is not in the group's interests, but one must not mistake this with the organization's ultimate goals; the Gaza Strip is a boiling pot, the fire underneath fuelled by a poor economy and an Islamist ideology.

It is felt that the Egyptians, the Americans and the Europeans could not be counted on by Israel to stop Hamas. The Israel Defence Force Southern Command has operational military plans for Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and recently conducted several weeks of training for infantry, armour, and engineering units in Gaza along the border aimed at preventing Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives from planting bombs and digging tunnels in the area.

Hamas has established a full-fledged army, consisting of four brigades, in the Gaza Strip. In addition, they had smuggled in over the twenty tons of explosives from the Sinai. It is believed that they have obtained anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles and they were working to improve the range of their store of Kassam rockets. They are an organized infantry force now totalling number of some 13,000 recruits, some having been trained in Iran. They have the training, and the motivation to oppose Israel.

Yet the Israel Defence Force is confident it has the necessary capability to stop Hamas, and all that is needed is the go-ahead from the government.

In some reports we are told Iran is to provide Syria with \$1b for new Syrian fighter jets, tanks, missiles against naval craft and will aid in Syria's nuclear and chemical weapons research programs. In return, Syrian President Assad has promised Iranian President Ahmadinejad to cease the pursuit of peace talks with Israel in exchange for Iranian support of Syrian interests in Lebanon.

The report went on to say that aside from economic, cultural and scientific cooperation, Iran will help to fund Syria's purchase of Russian and North Korean weapons. These weapons to include 400 advanced Russian T-72 tanks, 18 Russian Mig 31s, and eight M-8 helicopters. In addition, Iran will help Syria build factories that would manufacture medium-range missiles, and will supply Syria with Iranian-made tanks and armoured personnel carriers. The Syrian navy will also be re-armed with Chinese-made C-801 and C-802 missiles, which are presently being manufactured in Iran.

Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Lieberman said, "I call on the prime minister and the head of the opposition to reconsider the option of [forming] an emergency national unity government" because Iran is becoming an ever increasing threat to the stability of all regions of the Middle East.

Foreign Arye Eldad said the agreement between Iran and Syria was "reminiscent of the pacts that were signed on the eve of the Six Day and Yom Kippur Wars." "The Iranian decision will lead to attacks on Israel launched from Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Iran."

The former Minister of Justice of Israel, Beilin said "The threat from the North is growing right before our eyes."

Compiled from Internet sources

## **“Christadelphians – The Untold Story”...?**

Our readers may recall that in the May/June Circular Letter we reproduced a six page letter that Russell sent to Bro. Richard Pursell following the receipt of his book “Christadelphians - The Untold Story.” Russell felt obliged to send the letter because of the errors reproduced in the book about Nazarene beliefs.

The letter clearly drew Bro. Pursell’s attention to these errors, for which there can be little excuse as he had been receiving the Nazarene Circular Letter since February 2002 as well as literature on many other aspects of our beliefs.

There has been no reply or even an acknowledgement to the detailed letter. This is not a complete surprise to us, as this has always been our experience with Christadelphians who profess to have studied and researched Nazarene beliefs in order to write about them for themselves.

In reality they have done no such thing, and when corrected or challenged on matters of fact, they then take refuge in silence. It is wearisome to say the least, to find our views misrepresented yet again simply because a writer cannot or will not take care to read properly, and then reproduce accurately what Nazarenes publish openly and believe to be the true Gospel.

Sister Helen Brady

---

### **Some Comments on Edward Turney’s Question and other matters raised in the last C.L.**

My own view as held for some time is that Jesus did not partake of the bread and wine He said were symbols of His body and blood. Did He not say, “Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you?”

The Apostle John says of Jesus “In him was life and the life was the light of men” John 1:4.

St Peter accused the Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus “Ye killed the Prince of Life.”

Jesus said of the symbolic bread and wine given to His disciples, “This is my body given for you, this is my blood of the New Covenant shed for you.” I do not read that He included Himself.

The unleavened bread was that required to be on the table for the keeping of the Passover and the Lamb was to be without blemish or clean under the Law.

Jesus the antitype would be superior to the type in every sense in birth, flesh and character, otherwise He could not be a fit sacrifice for the taking away of the sin of the world, that of Adam, and John the Baptist does not use the plural but the singular. Jesus died the penalty of Sin due to Adam when there were no sins (in the personal sense) of the world.

I am the bread which came down from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die. Surely then Jesus needed not to eat of His own flesh to live. And it is certain He was not referring to natural death in the latter statement, “not die.”

When I first received the Shofar Magazine some years ago I was quite excited to find what appeared to be some confirmation of Edward Turney’s views and those of our own. But I found a similar position in that questions were put to the joint editors by its readers, mainly Christadelphians, but no addresses printed, the answers left to the editors whom I found did not supply the true scriptural answers in some cases.

It reminded me of a Christadelphian booklet entitled “Answers to Bible Questions” by Robert Roberts which I found did not give some answers in harmony with the Bible but compiled by R. Roberts to conform to his views in the Clauses of the B.A.S.F. causing obstruction to further enlightenment in search of the Truth.

After reading Brother Russell Gregory’s reply to the views of the Shofar editor explaining that the Editor had not grasped the truth of the matters involving Edward Turney and Robert Roberts I was grieved and saddened that blindness was the predominant factor in failing to see the great difference between Christadelphianism world wide on the understanding of why Jesus died on Calvary to fulfil the atoning work of God by Love and Grace. A work God could not justify with a sacrifice of condemned flesh as taught in Christadelphian literature and which caused my resignation among other errors of their teaching.

It is well known by Nazarenes that Christadelphians will add to and take away from what is written in the Scriptures rather than admit their ignorance of explanation of certain subjects. For example, the immortal soul believers, they will quote from Ezekiel “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Yet Adam could not die as a living soul until his nature was changed as a result of sin according to Clause 5 of the B.A.S.F. It was when Adam sinned that he became mortal although corruptible at his creation.

This also has been explained correctly by Brother Russell Gregory; Dr Thomas also but Robert Roberts theory has taken its place yet he learned all he needed to from Dr Thomas, so he said.

“How to Read the Bible Effectively” is the title of Christadelphian Seminars yet they cannot read effectively the Genesis account of Adam’s created nature as a living soul capable of decay and death like the animal creatures dependant on the breath of life as was confirmed when the Noah flood destroyed them.

When God placed Adam in the Garden under Law for obedience he became mortal – subject to death by Law, that is, death by infliction, not by change of nature. Why do people not see this? It is the lack of reading the Bible effectively and rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Another example of not understanding the words of Jesus to Martha when she spoke of her assurance that her brother Lazarus would rise again at the last day, Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Note the present tense “He that believeth in me though he were dead,” that means dead under the Law of Sin and Death, not physically dead but belief in Christ has made him alive unto God by faith, so Jesus continues “And he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

At funerals I have heard the clergymen quote it as “Though he die yet shall he live and he that liveth and believeth in me shall not die eternally.” A Christadelphian quoted it thus: “He that liveth and believeth in me, at my return shall never die.”

To sum it all up the false belief in natural death as the penalty Adam incurred by his sin presents the difficulty and it is wrong to make his corruptible dying nature a penalty for his sin; this the Creator never did which a reading of the Genesis account effectively will prove, but most prefer to accept the erroneous understanding of men who come in their own name who make Adam’s day of evening and morning a thousand years which David and the Apostle Peter never meant to convey. It was the eternity of God compared with natural of man which compared to it was as nothing. There can only be one conclusion to the confused situation we have addressed in believing the common death to be the penalty of Adam’s sin, but not correct. In the words of Jesus, this is the conclusion “No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

This is the authority Jesus had from His Father, how then can anyone say that He required redemption for Himself and must die to receive it? To believe such error renders one spiritually bankrupt of Salvation.

Phil and Rene Parry. ‘Nazarenes’ by the Grace of God and Jesus Christ His Son.

# Exhortation

## The Abuse of Understanding

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Greetings in Jesus' Name.

The Apostle Paul declares,

“I am not ashamed, of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17).

In this regard no law of God is more absolute than

“He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9).

Those among us who have been taught to prize the Word of God and the truth it contains, should pray earnestly and implore the Most High, through Jesus, for a new heart and the right spirit which will seek those true riches by means of which

“we might become partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

It is in this direction, as in no other, which enables man to seek pardon for his sins through the blood of Christ,

“according as His Divine power hath given unto us all things pertaining to life, and goodliness through the knowledge of Him that hath called us unto glory and virtue.” (2 Peter 1:3).

Especially ought we to note that these exceeding great and precious promises are given to us dependant of one thing: that is, knowledge of Him. This is of paramount importance as we shall see if we read 1 Corinthians 13:2. Paul here testifies that

“without such knowledge man would be nothing,”

which in the language of the Psalmist means,

“a man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beast that perishes” (49:20).

This is indeed a strong expression, nonetheless. Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding are the things needful which enable men to seek salvation from man's great adversary - death. Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding are the requisitions necessary for the exertions to be in Christ. They constitute the incentive by which man will produce in himself as much of Christ's love as possible, and not as much as he hopes he will get away with.

But albeit, the greatest evil prevalent in this world today is the evil of the abuse of understanding; an evil that is as old as the hills; we read:

“In the beginning God ...”

But alas, almost with his creation man asserts himself, and lo, the evil of the abuse of understanding is the evil thereof. Such evil was fostered and nourished to a degree that it flourishes above all else, and grieved God in His heart, and repented that He had made man. “Thus God said unto Noah,

“The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Genesis 6).

Despite this destruction, however, the widespread perversion of the will of God that existed before the flood was again soon, in evidence. Here, the abuse of understanding induced Jonah to attempt an escape from the presence of God, and which deceived his sea-faring companions to “each cry unto his own God” (Jonah 1), exactly as if a piece of wood or metal could guard them from evil and danger. Similarly, the heathen aboard the ship in which Paul sailed from Malta to Syracuse worshipped Castor and Pollux (Acts 28:11). These were two idols into whose care the ship was committed, and were to the heathen what the living God was to Paul.

Athens is famous for its art and literature, but Paul bore testimony against the Athenians in the very city.

“I beheld an altar with this inscription. To the Unknown God whom therefore ye ignorantly worship” (Acts 17:23).

It is much the same today, perhaps not precisely an idol of wood or stone, nor yet an altar suitably inscribed, but many do worship a God that they know little or nothing about, and which is an evil more destructive than a deliberate sin. Colleges are erected in which the tutors cleave to the arm of flesh for spiritual guidance, the intricacies of which enable them to pervert the very meaning of the Word of God and the Sacrifice of Christ. Their teaching distorts Biblical facts, and channels people’s minds into belief of things not commanded in the Bible, which they pretend were spoken and taught by holy men of old. They go to their Bibles to prove what they think and not to learn what they haven’t thought out. Graduates are honoured and diplomatised for the proficiency in the art of human contrivance of wisdom. Rational non-churchgoing men are driven to abstain from religion and to look upon God, and logically, as a reluctant old tyrant, for they cannot understand how the Graciousness of an ever merciful God falls below their own standard of ethics.

This obviously must be the case if it be true that natural death is the legacy of the Adamic sin, and true it will remain as long as a man continues to transform the truth of God into fantastic tales, and we are required to accept it as truth.

The initial error lies in the fact that a word, which has no reference to the natural man in Scripture, is inserted in a verse where it ought not to be. We speak of the creation of man. Here God relates the fact that

“He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7).

The verse does not say “everlasting soul” - it merely says “living soul.” Emanating from this initial abuse of understanding is the widespread perversion at the truth of God, and which assumes authority far above the written Word of God. Its destruction is paramount in the diminishing importance of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and the supposed insatiable desire of God to seek vengeance.

Oh, let this not be the case with us; let us turn to our Bibles and read things as necessary to God’s point of view and not as being necessary to our point of view; let us be convinced that God is more ready and more willing to impart us with knowledge, wisdom and understanding than we are to seek it.

The fundamental requirement of God is understanding, for it embraces all that is required of man which enables him to acknowledge God’s wisdom and purpose with the creation of man, our relation to Him, and the teaching concerning Christ. It is only by understanding Christ’s love towards us are we able to respond with a love for Christ, for to be ignorant of the things concerning Christ is to be ignorant of Salvation.

In the New Testament, as in Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:24, and Colossians 3:10, the Apostle Paul speaks of believers in Christ having put on the “new man,” and still more plainly, as in Romans 8, of the change effected in the believer. He there shows the obligation upon all who are made partakers of Salvation through Christ to forsake their evil ways and to live according to the spirit of Christ - always doing and submitting to the will of the Father.

My friends, to do this we must beware lest we be satisfied to let the Word of God be covered and obscured by the evil of the abuse of understanding; it is an evil imagination which cleaves to the hearts of men who will not permit God to put His truth into their minds. Let us pray earnestly that this may not be the case with us, “for dreadful is the state of those in whom sin is graven on the tables of their heart.” (Jeremiah 17:1).

God will put His truths into our minds, enabling us to do His will in all things if we obey His commandment to “keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23.

It is by knowledge, wisdom and understanding are we able to avoid despising the Word of God and to listen to His precepts and threatenings and accept the promise of mercy and the declaration of the love of God towards us. We need not be abusive of understanding if we have the earnest desire to learn His Word and enthusiastically respond with true love for the love given to us on the Cross.

Wisdom, knowledge and understanding is available to all who diligently seek the truth of God. We read,

“the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” Psalm 19:7,

“the Lord preserveth the simple. Psalm 116:6,

“the entrance of thy “Word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.” Psalm 119:130.

Yes, the Bible was written to make men wise unto salvation, and clearly set forth so that a plain simple man may understand the evil of sin and the Truth of the Gospel. Especially ought we to remember that Jesus chose twelve men who were plain fishermen, or much the same class, to preach the Word of God to the world (Matthew 4:18, 21, Mark 1:19). This must be the strongest proof that can be of the Divine origin of the Word of God and that its prevalence is not due to human contrivance of wisdom. Truly is the law of God more absolute in

“he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” than any other.

We shall be foolish, to doubt it.

B. D. Lewis.

---

## From Forum Posts

A few weeks ago I posted Brother Ernest Brady’s booklet “I Can’t Understand” on an Internet forum. I have not reproduced the booklet here and I think most of our readers will have had a copy. (If anyone wishes to have a copy, it will be sent free of charge).

Here are some of the posts which followed:

**Ronnie writes:-** Hello Russell, The first question raised in the reproduced article by Ernest Brady is: “Let us then suppose a friend enquiring the reason for your hope and belief, and you are asked, “For whom did Christ die?” Would you answer, “He died for Himself?””

A quick look at scriptures gives us the following ready answers, although there could be more to be deduced from other passages. For the ungodly. For us (Paul writing to the Romans). That he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. Thy brother. For our sins, according to the scriptures.

What I find difficult with point 2 of the statement i.e. “By disobedience he brought himself under sentence to a violent death” is that in looking at the two references quoted, Genesis 2:17 and Romans 5:12, as supporting this statement I see nothing at all about ‘violent death’.

Why is it, do you suppose that violence is smuggled in here as if it were actually in the scriptures?

Ronnie.

**Paul writes:-** Please can you help. It is a long time since I have looked at anything to do with this. Ronnie picked up on the ‘violent’ death emphasis in Ernest Brady’s paper.

In the first paper he says in points 2 and 3 that he received the penalty of a ‘violent’ death which he only suffered in type (through the death of the animals from whom the skins came I presume) but then in point 8 he says that Adam suffered a violent death. This seems to me at the least confusing and even contradictory apart from bringing in, as Ronnie says, the unscriptural emphasis of ‘violent’. It seems as if he is shifting emphasis away from death as the penalty. Is this what Ernest Brady is actually doing as far as you know as seems to be the case later in the second half where I think it is Brady saying “mistaken deduction from Genesis 3:19, and Romans 5:12, that natural death was the punishment for sin.”

I find trust in this kind of polemic difficult because it treads so easily upon holy ground which can only be approached through the Spirit by which Jesus was enabled to make that perfect sacrifice. All of the teaching of God’s word is precious to those who know how precious their Lord and His sacrifice is. He received a name above every name because of His obedience. He was in every point tempted as we are yet without sin.

I very much doubt whether in the way presented these disputings were of any value and whether they even began to approach the distinctions over Truth that Ernest Brady thought they did. But I am interested also in whether you know what he thought the significance of death, without it being violent, was.

Love in Jesus. Paul.

**Russell writes:** Dear Ronnie and Paul, It is usual in our present day to think that violence has to do with great physical force but the term should not be constricted to mean only this. A sportsman can violate the rules of his game or someone released from prison can violate the terms of his parole. In both cases the violation may be quite innocently done and without any physical force.

Ananias and Sapphira fell dead at the feet of Peter and I would call those violent deaths because their natural expectancy of life was violated, i.e. unexpectedly terminated. I believe Ernest Brady used the word “violent” in this sense. In Genesis 2:17 we read that “...in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” and this conveys the expectancy of termination of his life that very day. I do not see that “violence” was smuggled in here as it is already suggested by the text that he, Adam, should most certainly be put to death that very day.

I fear, Paul, you have mis-read Ernest Brady in point 8 for he does not say “that Adam suffered a violent death” but that it was Jesus who suffered the violent death which of course is very true.

You also pointed out the use of “violent” but I do not know what other term Ernest Brady could have used. He wanted to make the distinction between natural death and inflicted death. Dr Thomas saw that natural death was not the wages of sin when he wrote:

*“It is possible that Adam and Eve would have died after a long time if no further change had been operated upon their nature... The animal nature will sooner or later dissolve. It was not constituted so as to continue in life for ever, independent of any further modification. We may admit, therefore, the corruptibility, and consequent mortality of their nature, without saying they were mortal... in this sense, therefore, I say, that in their novitiate, Adam and his betrothed had a nature capable of corruption...” - “Elpis Israel,” page 65. (or pages 72-73 in 14th Edition 1958).*

Natural death is not the punishment for sin but judicial death is.

I most certainly agree with you Paul, that “All of the teaching of God’s word is precious to those who know how precious their Lord and His sacrifice is.” And that “He received a Name above every name because of His obedience...” But you “doubt whether in the way presented these disputings were of any value and whether they even began to approach the distinctions over Truth that Ernest Brady thought they did.”

I am not sure what you mean by “distinctions over Truth” because here we see Ernest Brady making a distinction between truth and error which is very important if we are to understand why Jesus chose to die a sacrificial death. It is not a matter of disputing for the sake of it - far from it - but a matter of whether or not we are worshipping God in Spirit and in truth as He seeks us to do, and to honour the Son even as we honour the Father. Jesus was daily in dispute - because all He dealt with was “holy ground” and I humbly ask that we all should prayerfully seek where the truth lies.

Regarding the significance of death - Ernest Brady could see that there are no less than 5 deaths dealt with in Scripture. I will enlarge on this if you wish but I feel I have said enough for the moment.

With Love to all in Jesus. Russell.

**Paul writes:-** Thanks for that. I don’t think I agree with either Ernest Brady or Dr Thomas that it was a judicial or violent death that was the penalty. In fact I am rather surprised with that whole concept. The whole thrust of scripture surely is that it was death pure and simple that passed upon a creation. It was a very large and unscriptural presumption on Dr Thomas’s part to think that that they had a mortality before the fall. Mortality came with the fall, immortality comes with the one man also. Where are all the complications of judicial death and ‘natural death that would have happened to Adam anyhow without the fall in Romans 5. I beg to suggest that both Ernest Brady and Dr Thomas have got it very wrong.

Russell I still doubt whether these polemical disputations about the atonement by Christians, who should all have been prepared to start and finish their disputings at the point of agreement whether they needed to live by grace of God’s forgiveness, ever served worshipping in Spirit and Truth. We have elevated to intellectual niceties and spiritual arrogance (I am not saying you are displaying that but in the articles and papers you quote that was the actual spirit that underlay otherwise sincere people seeking to lovingly support fellow Christians in their walk) disputations on things I think we barely understand because they have been approached through that route and not through the presumption that we can all first stand completely united in the forgiveness that has been extended to us through Jesus. If the ‘clean flesh’ and other heresy hunts of the community say anything on any side they speak of a spiritual bankruptcy which has put intellectual understanding before real spiritual need. I hope that is not too strongly stated but looking at it from this distance and over 40 years discipleship and now getting on 15 outside the community and aware many of the other rifts, dissensions and difficulties of the day and every day in wider Christian circles that is how it seems to me.

Thanks so much for giving me the information I sought, disturbing though I find it.

Brady’s conclusion that we should be re-baptised if there is some doubt about the doctrinal correctness of the faith held at a previous baptism is clearly one that Dr Thomas believed and practised as most of us know. I find it even more unacceptable these days. We are baptised, thankfully into Christ and His saving death, and not our understanding of it, which I am sure grows with discipleship, I am equally sure that the growth that is important is our love and our commitment to Him for what He has done before it is an intellectual understanding of the depths of it.

I don’t know where you are coming from in raising the comparison between Dr Thomas and Ernest Brady to pinpoint issues of concern with the community teachings in this area. As the Irishman said, very unhelpfully, about someone’s journey – ‘Well I wouldn’t start from there.’ Sorry to be a wet blanket and be critical of the debate you have raised but it sounds off the mark all round unless I have got my understanding of the simplicity of the fall and the penalty of death for sin very wrong and simply scripturally inadequate.

I agree that humbly seeking Truth is vitally important - as a loving response to a Father and Saviour who have given us and lived the Truth - but not as a presumption that we have to be continually raising the bar of

understanding to differentiate our correctness of doctrine rather elevating the wonder of His sacrifice. So much of the history of the community and its disputations seems to come through with that first of all.

Love in Jesus. Paul

**Russell writes:** Dear Paul, Thank you for your post. You express many sentiments with which I wholeheartedly agree regarding how we should love God and one another and I have a great deal of sympathy with your views on these things. God forbid that we should strive for intellectual niceties or show spiritual arrogance!

However God says “Come now and let us reason together.” What are we invited to reason about? The Atonement – “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” We are able to reason with God through study of His word and earnest prayer. There is no other way and surely it is good to share these matters with one another in the right spirit. To this end I believe we cannot understand what happened at Calvary unless we understand what happened in Eden; the two I feel are inseparable.

Surely we can understand far more than we do. The Bible is a never ending study and we must study to show ourselves approved. The official Christadelphian teaching is seriously in error regarding the Atonement and I feel I would be lacking in my love for God or for my former brethren if I did not wish to, or did not bother to point out wherein the error lay. Though I have received many very abusive letters I have also received many very welcome and joyful letters which are very encouraging indeed.

It may be you do not wish to continue this discussion and I quite understand you may feel it will not go anywhere but there are one or two points I wish if I may, to refer to. Dr.Thomas is a little confusing in the quote I used - he didn't believe Adam was created mortal but that he became mortal at the 'fall.' It is pleasing to find you and I agree in the proper use of the term 'mortal' which is 'under condemnation as per law.' This fact alone seems not understood by most and the word mortal is generally used in a very loose sense.

I feel it is too simplistic to see death as all one, as it were, when we are able to distinguish five deaths spoken of in Scripture. In studying the Atonement issues we find each has its rightful place. This may sound complicated but they are there.

I feel I ought to point out regarding re-baptism that Ernest Brady made a definite distinction between lack of knowledge and positive error. I for one, when understanding better the issues involved, chose not to be re-baptised as I had never believed the B.A.S.F. regarding defiled flesh. God condemned people for their sin; He never defiled or changed their flesh in any way.

Bringing in Dr.Thomas was of little interest to any outside of the Christadelphian community. I guess the Irishman was right.

To close I quote from a letter from a Christadelphian Sister which I received a few days ago:- “Thank you for your literature. I never knew what the differences were between us, and I don't think they can be that important. Not one of us has complete understanding, and we will be judged by whether we love rather than what we know.” There is a great deal of truth in what she says and I am not sure yet how to respond to her letter. It needs prayerful consideration.

With Love in Jesus. Russell

**Paul writes:** Dear Russell, Thank you for such a lovely gracious reply that has so much really beneficial stuff to discuss. I can see I am going to benefit from and enjoy this correspondence as soon as I can make the time to give this post of yours the response it deserves.

Thanks again. Love, Paul.

**Ronnie writes:** Hello Russell, The difficulties that I have with what you think Ernest Brady means are two fold.

Firstly there are a lot of verses where the (English word, KJV) 'violence' is used - but it is not used in the Genesis or Roman text quoted. It's not that there isn't a word for violence, but God chooses not to use it in either of these verses, or as far as I can see, concerning the death or manner of death of anyone. So why make this choice?

Secondly, using 'violence' diverts our attention away from the scriptures and we end up speculating on what the human user may or may not have meant by his uninspired use.

Ronnie

**Linda writes:** Sounds good to me!

>>To close I quote from a letter from a Christadelphian Sister which I received a few days ago:- "Thank you for your literature. I never knew what the differences were between us, and I don't think they can be that important. Not one of us has complete understanding, and we will be judged by whether we love rather than what we know." <<(R)

Dear Russell and All, I see it this way - that there is a difference between a life taken by natural causes e.g. old age, and one that is terminated suddenly because of outside intervention. Adam, because he descended from a spiritual plane where he communed with God, to a plane of disobedience, was doomed to a cessation of his life, suddenly/in that day i.e. he would be killed - such is the result of passing from life to death - the spiritual heights communing with God (walking in the garden), to covering of self with leaves (hiding from God) because of shame (the depths). Maybe expulsion from the Garden of Eden before being clothed with the lamb would have resulted in his sudden death in the outside lower world. However, it isn't a matter of interpretation as it's part of the narrative - that Adam didn't die, but something else did. We believe that the animal whose skin covered Adam and Eve prefigured the saving work of Jesus Christ. When Adam and Eve were expelled, they were covered and lived on in their natural life. It's like us, living on in the material world, seeking consolation and comfort that can only come from the covering of Christ.

I'm reading about the laws of nature, ego and altruism at present and am keen to see how they fit in to pre and post sin and Eden. I'm feeling as if lots of what I studied, thought and discussed is being filled out. The altruistic force, without which we won't see God, is love. No wonder Jesus manifested God entirely because He was living love - the word made flesh.

Without the intervention of God through Jesus Christ, we would all just continue to live and die according to the laws of nature.

Love Linda

**Russell writes:** Thank you all, for your replies. Paul, for your kind words though I feel they are undeserved. Ronnie for your two points of concern which I quite understand. And Linda for explaining what you see happened in Eden so clearly and for emphasising the love of God and Jesus and our need for show that love also.

To answer the matters raised it seems best to let Ernest Brady answer for himself.

**[At this point I posted Brother Ernest Brady's article, "That The Penalty Incurred By Adam Was Violent Death"]**

**Ronnie writes:** Hello again Russell, I won't mention this again as nothing can be done about something written 50 years ago, but I am aware of the emotive and interpretive language used (without support) by Ernest Brady. I mean words like "simple law", "plain threat" and 'in the day' becoming 'on the very day'. It isn't helpful and skews the pitch. In the latest piece posted it can be seen that having introduced violence into Gen 2 and Romans, without warrant in my opinion, it then becomes accepted as a fact and used copiously throughout the rest of the article.

There are 13 references to 'dying thou shalt die' and they are listed below. I agree they all speak of death. The Ezekiel references are I think helpful in the discussion and maybe constitute the 3 references missing from the 10 mentioned by Ernest Brady?

Ezekiel 3:18-20 "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

It is also of interest perhaps that Shimei was a while waiting for the death sentence to come upon him (rather than 'on the day' or 'immediate'). He ventures from Jerusalem to Gath and back (>100 miles as the crow flies), has a meeting with the king and then is fallen upon.

The case of Jonathan 1 Sam 14 is also interesting in that there are other similarities with Genesis. Saul makes a command about eating food (v24), there is a curse attached to eating (v24), Jonathan eats (v26), his eyes are opened (enlightened) (v27). Saul asks Jonathan 'what is this you have done (v43) (cp Gen 3:13 God to the woman).

My point is that in Ezekiel there is the opportunity for repentance. In Samuel, Jonathan didn't die and in 1 Kings Shimei didn't die 'on the day'.

Ronnie

**Russell writes:** Dear Ronnie, Thank you for your post. Obviously we are not in agreement here and I am all too aware that being emotive can be counter-productive to discussion. We are very thankful for the few forums like this one for in Christadelphia there is no choice of understanding however sincere, while here choices can be presented fairly and readers are able to make up their own minds.

I am aware of the thirteen references of "surely die" and I would like to mention to others who perhaps may not know, that this style of speech is a common Hebrew idiom - literally it reads, "dying thou shalt die," to emphasise the certainty of death and in every one of the thirteen quotations it means a putting to death and never natural death due to age. This idiom, or style of speech, is also seen in Genesis 2:16 where Adam is told "thou mayest freely eat" or literally, "eating thou shalt eat" - and also in the New Testament where Jesus said "with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you" thus He emphasised His great desire for the opportunity of completing His mission of taking away the sin of the world which we should remember in these emblems of unsurpassed love for us.

You say, Ronnie, that your point is that in Ezekiel there is the opportunity for repentance. In Samuel, Jonathan didn't die and in 1 Kings, Shimei didn't die "on the day."

With regard to Ezekiel the fact that there is given an opportunity for repentance supports our explanation for Adam not being put to death.

Besides the similarities in 1 Samuel 14 to events in Eden which you mention, there are also the contrasts. God made the wise decree in Eden because He wanted man to live to His honour and glory and though Adam failed, God showed His great love in allowing him to continue in life; in contrast Saul made a foolish decree and in ignorance (and therefore innocent) Jonathan offended that decree. Saul was not prepared to forgive so the people rescued Jonathan - "and the people said... as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan that he died not." Saul's intent was clear but it was overruled.

In the case of Shimei, he had already been allowed to live on condition of a second chance (2 Samuel 19 and 1 Kings 2:8,9). Shimei made light of this and chose wilfully to disobey. Solomon was not God who could carry out the penalty in the day Shimei crossed over Jordan but Solomon did carry out the sentence at the very first possible opportunity.

There is nothing in all these events which undermines our understanding of them but they all teach the penalty of inflicted death as a result of unforgiven disobedience. Likewise this is the penalty of which God warns the guilty in regard to the second death at the end of the thousand year reign of Jesus (Revelation 20).

In Genesis we read that “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” May I ask how Adam was to die in that day if it was not a case of being put to death? And if it were not violent death then how would you describe it? You can hardly call a putting to death a natural death. I agree that if Genesis does not refer to a putting to death in the very day of transgression then neither does Romans 5:12 carry the idea. But is there an alternative which makes better sense?

I believe the animal which provided the skin covering for Adam was put to death instead of Adam being put to death.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

**Linda writes:** >>*I believe the animal which provided the skin covering for Adam was put to death instead of Adam being put to death.*<< (R)

Me too! - as a prefiguring. It was the blood of Jesus that eventually saved; Jesus died in Adam's place. It really goes to show that without God's salvation in the blood of Christ, we are all aligned to the state of loss - being without God and without life. Linda

**R.Brierly writes:** Hi everybody, Though I haven't contributed much, I want to tell you all how much I have enjoyed reading both the current postings and past postings.

I have read a number of times the series on clean flesh and I appreciate the fact that Russell has posted the writings by Ernest Brady. I've been a Christadelphian for fifty years, the first twenty-five in the Central fellowship here in America and the second in what is called the Unamended fellowship (sometimes referred to as Advocate.)

The subject of the atonement has left a long trail of divisions all over and no two people will define “clean flesh” in the same way but there are numerous self-appointed guardians of “the Truth” that are very quick to claim the somebody (always from the other fellowship of course) is inflicted with clean flesh.

I once sat when in my early twenties in the living room of a brother not in either the Central or Unamended fellowship and asked him why he wasn't in the same Central ecclesia I was a member of. He told me that there were five brethren in that ecclesia who taught clean flesh. I pushed him a bit for the names of the five brethren. Four of them were dead. The next Sunday I went up to the fifth and had a long discussion with him. Perhaps I hadn't been trained sufficiently in the techniques of recognizing this terrible heresy but I didn't hear anything that was alarming.

In fact, while sitting in that living room I was exposed to a line of thinking which I had ran into before, a line of thinking which is held by the traditional Advocates and surprisingly the Bereans here in this county that has always sounded to me too close to original sin for comfort. It is very transactional and legal and as Robin has pointed out quite Augustinian.

I believe that when we hear a brother, perhaps more in the Central fellowship than the other two here in America, articulate the atonement in terms different than the pioneer way of articulating it, what we are hearing is not necessarily a full acceptance of the concept presented by Ernest Brady but a bit of a backlash against the “original sin” sounding concepts presented by the pioneers.

Hence, one mentions “holy, harmless, and undefiled” in a talk or writing and there are those who are immediately turning up the burners under the tar pot and plucking the feathers from the chickens.

We are treading on holy ground in discussing this subject and I love the way this has been expressed in this forum. It also strikes me as a subject which should be simple and easy to explain.

I have a box which I call my “busy box.” In that box I have the writings of just about every brother that has

ever written on the subject with the exception of Ernest Brady, and I do thank Russell for making these available. Has this “busy box” helped me clarify my thinking on the atonement? Absolutely not. We have to be extremely careful when looking at this subject to recognize when the underpinnings of a concept are a theory and I will admit, that is no easy task especially when we pride ourselves on Biblical interpretation.

I have strayed from my main point in writing but let me state it before I close. We have been studying in our Sunday School class a series of articles in the Tidings (a magazine primarily for the Central here in North America) written by John Launchbury. They have been like a breath of fresh air on this subject. They have shifted the emphasis quite radically from the classical atonement views to one which makes a lot more sense. I think one of his key statements is to claim that we ask the wrong question when we ask “Why did Christ have to die?” The question we need to ask is “why did Christ die?”

These are available online at the following URL. This is for the first article. To read the second just change the 200601 to 200602. <http://www.tidings.org/studies/salvation200601.htm>

I hope you will enjoy them as much as we have.

Love in the Lord, Russ Brierly

**Ronnie writes:** Hello Russell, Thanks for your reply and comments. Yes I agree from the context of the 13 references the teaching of ‘dying thou shalt die’ is not referring to death that comes with ageing or is progressive in its nature but is more immediate. I still want to resist being pushed into the ‘violent’ description for the reasons I gave before. ‘Die’ is adequate for me and the context of the other scriptures can provide the background and time frame.

The Lord God lays two charges with Adam: That he listened to the voice of his wife **AND** he had eaten of the tree.

The consequence of these actions is the cursing of the ground, not death as we might expect. The link is made that this is the consequence of eating of the tree in 3:17.

Gen 2:17 for **in the day that thou eatest** thereof thou shalt surely die.

Gen 3:17 **Because thou hast** hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast **eaten** of the tree, of which I commanded thee, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake.

In fact there is no mention of death but a description of how life will be henceforth. Why is this do you think?

One possibility could be the unrecorded warning and repentance in line with the Ezekiel passages we discussed in a previous message. I haven’t trodden his path before so need to give it a bit more thought.

Ronnie

**Linda writes:** The Message Bible puts it like this... Genesis 2.16,17 – “GOD commanded the Man, ‘You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don’t eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you’re dead.’”

Love Linda

**Robin writes:** Yes, the moment he ate of that tree, the Adam whom God created died. No one dies physically immediately upon sinning, but there is death in other ways much more profound, and physical death eventually comes. To God, physical death is a foregone conclusion when “spiritual” death has taken place. The animal skins were not meant to save him from some kind of violent death at that moment. The skins simply represented God’s desire to continue having a relationship with the man and woman despite their own self-inflicted and misguided internal shame for a nakedness that was not wrong in the first place. The skins were a healing gesture and are a type of our healing through Christ’s sacrifice. Neither God’s righteousness nor relationship standards for us are legally defined. Rather, they are covenantally defined.

Robin

**Linda writes:** >>To God, physical death is a foregone conclusion when “spiritual” death has taken place.<<(R)

Dear Robin, and All, This will continue in the future also won't it? Anyone who isn't covered by the blood of Christ will experience eternal death.

It has occurred to me that I wonder if we sometimes think it was God who was going to slay Adam, and it was God who slew Jesus. Well, I don't see that that could have been the case at all. Sin is the slayer, and sinful people do the slaying. The fact is Jesus was tried in a "kangaroo court" by evil people, and then put to death by them. I think this is what was going to happen to Adam if God had put him out of the garden without a covering.

We see it again with Cain. Cain killed his brother. God said, "From now on you'll get nothing but curses from this ground; you'll be driven from this ground that has opened its arms to receive the blood of your murdered brother. You'll farm this ground, but it will no longer give you its best. You'll be a homeless wanderer on Earth." Cain said to God, "My punishment is too much. I can't take it! You've thrown me off the land and I can never again face you. I'm a homeless wanderer on Earth and whoever finds me will kill me." God told him, "No. Anyone who kills Cain will pay for it seven times over." God put a mark on Cain to protect him so that no one who met him would kill him."

We are looking at protection, by a mark, from being killed. I'm thinking this is what would have happened to Adam if he hadn't been protected by the blood of the lamb. God covered Adam and Eve Gen 3.21, and then expelled them from Eden Gen 3. 23,24. So, to my way of thinking, God did prevent Adam being killed that day, because He covered him before sending him out. Love Linda

**Willow writes:** Dear All, I don't understand many things in this area of discussion. The mechanics of the atonement have rarely come up in my ecclesial life. Does it come up often elsewhere in other people's experience? I think the measure of what Christadelphian teaching is should be what people are teaching in the field to convert others. I don't see atonement theology featuring.

I have read around this area in the past and itemised lists of propositions like that submitted by Russell beg many questions of definition for me.

I said once before elsewhere that Genesis 3 contains two presentations of atonement: i) the necessity for a knock on the head; ii) the contingent provision of skins of covering. Jesus' resurrection on account of his sinlessness is an obvious knock on the head of the Serpent. Aren't notions of sacrifice about the contingent provision of skins and teaching devices unrelated to the new creation begun in a sinless resurrection?

Willow

**Russell writes:** Dear All, Christians in the early centuries read the Scriptures in Greek in which there are two words for "life" - '*psuche*' when referring to our natural life and '*zoe*' when referring to spirit life.

This fact has been obscured by translators and we have lost an important understanding of the Atonement as a result. The distinction is rarely mentioned in Christadelphian literature though I did come across it in my youth without realising what the distinction led to. Later, when I became acquainted with Nazarene Fellowship Literature I found one or two interesting articles written some 20 to 60 years ago but the most thorough study I have seen so far was sent to me about ten years ago by a Christadelphian who sent it to me for publication "because no Christadelphian magazine is likely to be interested." However, some years before receiving this article from a Christadelphian I had typed out on my old typewriter, if my memory serves me correctly, 643 quotations from the New Testament relating to 'life,' 'alive,' 'live,' 'lived,' 'living' etc., in order to study how '*psuche*' and '*zoe*' were used.

Let's have a brief look - John 6:53 - "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no *zoe*/life in you. Whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal *zoe*/life and I will raise him up at the last day." Again John 10:10, Jesus said, "I am come that they might have *zoe*/life and that they might have it more abundantly." This is the life Jesus came to give us and it is not natural life. It is life that will never die if we are faithful.

The Greek word '*psuche*' refers to our natural life passed down from our parents at conception. Two more quotations from John 10. Up to John 10:10 the word '*zoe*' occurs at least 40 times and the word '*psuche*' is

not used even once - that is until verse 11. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his *psuche*/life for the sheep." Verse 15, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my *psuche*/life for the sheep."

In this very brief introduction to these quotations we see that Jesus lay down His natural life, a life He never received back for that life was in the blood shed for us at the foot of the cross.

In Revelation 2:9, we read of Jesus - "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." Alive here is 'zao' obviously not natural life but spirit life.

Now let's turn to John Launchbury's treatise, which was recommended in an earlier post. Part two entitled "Atonement Theories." Under the heading "Tread Reverently" he writes:- "

*One final note of preamble. Exploring the reasons for Jesus' death is very challenging. Historically it has caused all sorts of problems - communities have been split on this issue. Yet we are talking about the death of God's Son. This is holy ground; this is really holy ground that we're walking on. We have to come to this ground with great compassion, with great love for one another and with a great sense of our inadequacy before our Father, who has done so much for us and has given so much of Himself, and in which He was joined by His Son.*

*For us to sit and dissect it academically, and then argue, debate and divide over it goes against everything that Father and Son have been doing for us... Let us take off our shoes and bow down before the Majesty of our Father and the glory of His Son as we contemplate this subject."*

It is in this spirit that I wish to continue and present a few thoughts which are not in John's articles. John sets before his readers a "Parable of the circus" as follows:-

*"The circus was coming to town and a father with two sons said: "The circus is coming next weekend. If you boys behave yourselves well, we'll all go to the circus and have a good time." The older son behaved himself impeccably throughout the week - a wonderful example of behaviour. The same, unfortunately, could not be said of the younger boy. At the end of the week, the father, assessing the situation, said to the younger son, "I would dearly love to take you to the circus, but your behaviour simply hasn't merited it. I'm afraid that I'm going to have to live by my word and not take you to the circus." The younger son is absolutely devastated, and there is an impasse: what can be done?*

*In fact, the impasse is complete. The father can't simply say: "You know what? I'm going to simply forget what I said - you can come to the circus after all!" It would completely negate what the father had said. What can be done?*

*Then the older son comes to the rescue. He says: "Father, I will bear the punishment of the younger son; I will stay home from the circus so that you may take him to the circus. Your word is upheld and we shall achieve what we wanted to accomplish."*

We can see how John Launchbury uses this parable as an illustration showing that Jesus death could not be a substitute for us and from it presents the following problems:

*The first problem of substitution is one of justice. Since when is it a mark of justice to punish the wrong person? The whole notion of substitution is based on the idea that the justice of God has to be upheld, and so He does what? He punishes the wrong man! Do you see how it erodes the very core of the idea of justice?*

*The second problem with substitution is that the penalty is wrong. The penalty of sin is death, not dying. The penalty of sin is eternal separation from God; it is eternal destruction, oblivion - for ever. That punishment has not been borne by Jesus. Because Jesus is no longer dead, he has not borne the true penalty of sin. He tasted death, certainly. He experienced the agonies of death,*

*went into the grave and was dead for three days. But if he was supposed to be bearing our punishment, God should have left him dead.*

*Here's a third problem: this one is to do with forgiveness. Suppose Bob owes me five bucks. I keep saying: "Come on, Bob, you owe me five bucks. Pay up! Pay up!" Then Alice hears this and says to me, "You know what, I'll give you the five bucks that Bob owes you." Would it be fair for me now to go to Bob and say: "I forgive you your debt!" Not at all! Alice has already paid the debt; there's nothing to be forgiven. It's all been dealt with. So, if Jesus has paid the debt, if he has satisfied the legal requirement, where is the need for forgiveness? There's no role for it at all; the debt has been paid! Yet scripture says again and again that we come to God through forgiveness. We have to conclude, therefore, that there is a real debt outstanding! God says: "I forgive!" But if it's been paid, there's nothing left to forgive.*

*There's a fourth problem for the notion of substitution: the problem of focus. We began this article noting our great tendency to focus on God as the one with the problem. It's a natural human endeavour to say: "You know what? It's not really our fault! It's really God's fault – Jesus is our mediator, trying to sort things out with God..."*

*We turn everything around. Mankind is doing the same with a doctrine like substitution. In substitution we say: the real problem with salvation is that God got Himself in a legal fix; that Jesus had to die to get God out of the legal problems. "The problem is not with me, it's with God!" Given this human tendency, it's easy to see how doctrines like substitution could come to be developed.*

Would you believe it if said all four of John Launchberry's problems are man made, and that scripture does not support him? Well, this is what I hope to show next.

Regarding Problem one, that of justice. We agree entirely, of course, that punishing the wrong person is a travesty of justice and quite unthinkable that God would do any such thing. But that is not what happened as we shall see.

Regarding Problem two - death is everlasting. No, not all death is everlasting. Where there is forgiveness death is not everlasting and that is the gospel we preach. We agree that death for sin is everlasting - as John Launchbury says "*The penalty for sin is death...*" But then John goes on to say that - "*That punishment has not been borne by Jesus. Because Jesus is no longer dead, he has not borne the true penalty of sin. He tasted death, certainly. He experienced the agonies of death, went into the grave and was dead for three days. But if he was supposed to be bearing our punishment, God should have left him dead.*"

In answer to this I think we can now see the importance of the distinction between 'psuche' and 'zoe.' I believe Jesus when He said "I lay down my life (psuche) for the sheep." (John 10:15). This was His natural psuche/life with which He laid down in place of Adam's natural psuche/life which allowed Adam to continue in natural psuche/life under a second probation.

Jesus laid down His psuche/life but He did not rise from the dead with psuche/life. His natural psuche/life in the blood was no longer needed because He rose with spirit zoe/life and His psuche/life stayed dead.

This of itself does not prove "substitution" but it does allow for it without contradiction.

You may have noticed that Jesus said that He laid down His life for the sheep, while we also read that Jesus laid down His life for us. This because if Jesus had not laid down His natural life in place of Adam's natural life we would not have lived. The life we have had passed down to us is the natural Adamic life we received from through ancestors. Had Adam not been allowed to go on living due to the sentence being carried out then we would never have had Adamic life passed down to us, and so we can see that Jesus died not only for Adam but for us also.

Regarding Problem three - to do with forgiveness. John writes - *"If the debt's been paid, there's nothing left to forgive."* But this does not recognise the work of God in Jesus. Here we must consider "redemption." When Jesus died on Calvary He redeemed Adam and all in Adam, that is, the whole human race. Redemption is a purchase; we have been purchased with the blood of Jesus - Adam and all his family.

If it is accepted that Jesus died in place of Adam to give him a second probation we have also to accept that but for Jesus laying down His life we would never have been born. In this sense He lay down His life for the sheep, and all we like sheep have gone astray and need forgiveness of our sins, which is atonement.

But please note that redemption is not atonement.

Forgiveness which leads to eternal life is for those who are "in Christ." Though Jesus purchased the whole human race, the whole human race is not "in Christ". Salvation is not universal. Salvation is for those who come out of Adam and into Christ. Atonement is for these disciples who are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

*"If the debt's been paid, there's nothing left to forgive."* This is a non sequitur argument. If I owe you a large sum of money and a friend pays it for me then I still owe it; not to you but to my friend.

Regarding Problem four –

*There's a fourth problem for the notion of substitution: the problem of focus. We began this article noting our great tendency to focus on God as the one with the problem. It's a natural human endeavour to say: "You know what? It's not really our fault! It's really God's fault – Jesus is our mediator, trying to sort things out with God..."*

*We turn everything around. Mankind is doing the same with a doctrine like substitution. In substitution we say: the real problem with salvation is that God got Himself in a legal fix; that Jesus had to die to get God out of the legal problems. "The problem is not with me, it's with God!" Given this human tendency, it's easy to see how doctrines like substitution could come to be developed.*

Sorry, but I think John is just using words here. Never have I known anyone say or feel that *"It's not really our fault! It's really God's fault - Jesus is our Mediator, trying to sort things out with God..."* Surely this is stretching imagination too far.

What an assumption for someone who rejects the idea of substitution to say *"the real problem with salvation is that God got Himself in a legal fix."*

Sorry but I find this so unnecessary. Whatever is John thinking of?

*"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* Again, *"God is not willing that any should perish."* Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26, *"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath."* Therefore I don't want to comment any further except to express my strong objection to John's supposition that *"substitution says the real problem is that God got Himself into a legal fix."* This is just plain stupid.

I want now to go back to what John Launchberry sees as Problem one. The view that God punished the innocent in order that the guilty should go free is wrong and is not what happened. Let's look again at the Christadelphian Statement of Faith. God did not put Jesus to death as it states in Clause 12 of the B.A.S.F. and I quote:- *"He was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God..."* This is an abomination. Does John Launchberry believe this Clause 12?

If your child should get into difficulty while swimming in the sea, would you not do what you could to save your child? Is not this what God did for us through Jesus? A year or so ago my grandson got himself into trouble by taking train rides without buying the required tickets. He was unable to pay the fines himself so

my son paid instead. The railway company did not demand it again from my grandson. My grandson now owes this money to his dad. His dad had forgiven him. Is not this what Jesus does for each of us? All that God has ever done for mankind is out of His great love for us. God is LOVE. And Jesus and His Father are one. There is nothing amiss with the correct understanding of substitution. It is an essential part of the gospel of salvation. Let's thank God for Jesus our Substitute.

Love in Jesus to all. Russell

**Russell writes:** Dear Willow, "The mechanics of the atonement." Yes, that's how many see it! But we are discussing the greatest thing in the world - the Love of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. The reason it rarely come up in ecclesial life is because it creates argument owing to so many variations of understanding, so people get rather 'hot under the collar' when others disagree with their particular view.

I find it a very simple concept and feel others try to 'fit the pieces of the jigsaw in the wrong places.' But then others say the same of me!

Some years ago I wrote a short article entitled "Who Killed Jesus Christ?" The conclusion was that we sinners who want salvation are responsible for His death. This cuts across Christadelphian teaching which says that Jesus died for Himself (B.A.S.F. Clause 5) and that God killed His own Son (Clause 12). Surely neither of these views can be correct. I feel there is some lack of appreciation for the work of God in Jesus in such ideas. I recall one sister, in trying to explain these BASF teachings to me said "But can't you see the beauty of it all?" I didn't have the heart to say "No, there is no beauty in what you are saying" - so said nothing at all.

Simply to believe "Christ died that I may be forgiven" is perhaps enough, but to add so much more unwarranted belief such as there is in the B.A.S.F. and creeds and statements of faith of any denomination and say this is what you must believe... well it is very wrong.

There are some of us who wish to know "the mechanics" of the atonement and respond to God's invitation in Isaiah 1:18 "Come now and let us reason together..." The answers are in Scripture and I love to discuss these matters.

Converting others to Christadelphianism would be right if there were no errors there. I taught in Christadelphian Sunday Schools for about forty years and at that level of teaching I could see no faults whatever in the Teachers Notes. (I don't know how much may have been changed in the last twenty-five years). It seems a tragedy to me that more than Sunday School teaching is required by Christadelphians for baptism. Without wishing to be too extreme the position reminds me of Jesus words in Matthew 23:16, "Ye compass land and see to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." God forbid this should be the case, but it was given by Jesus as a warning lest we should be found to be doing the same.

While atonement theology may not be seen to be featuring in one's teaching we must not preach things that contradict the atonement such as Jesus having to die for Himself or that Jesus, "that Holy Thing" born to Mary, had defiled flesh, or that God killed Him. Surely these things are worth looking at, especially in answer to God's invitation.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

**Edgar Wille writes:** Dear Brothers and Sisters, Russell engages in controversy as a Christian gentleman, but there is nevertheless a great chasm between our understandings of the cross.

If I understand what he is saying it is this:-

*God said that if Adam and Eve broke his commandments they would be killed that very day. However God said he would provide one to endure this sentence on their behalf and for the time being animal sacrifices would do.*

*Jesus was provided, human, yet because of not having a human father he was free of the sentence. So he could voluntarily take it on himself instead of us. Then God was able to let us all off, because the sentence had been enforced. If God had forgiven us freely by his grace this would have meant he did not mean what he said when he passed the sentence and God would be unreliable and his integrity would have been in doubt.*

*Jesus dying enabled God to remit the sentence without loss of face and placed us on the road to obedience which was expected of us in, but where there was forgiveness, true grace when we failed, if repentant.*

This is a dreadful view of God as victim of his own laws, producing a cruel mechanism to get out of the difficulty. The doctrine which Russell propounds is all interpretation - who says not having a human father means that one is not descended from that father through the mother? How does an innocent victim being found justify God's ways? What is the moral impact of all this legal machinery? How does it inspire us with a sense of the love of God? What a petty God is presented? More like Shylock wanting his pound of flesh!

I believe there is no one theory of atonement in Scripture, but many angles of view on which we are invited to reflect, grow in grace and in love of God in Christ. We are saved by the Christ who died and rose, not by a theory about him.

He stands in weakness - drawing upon himself all the evil of the world and exposing it and providing in his very experience, reflected upon, a platform for a new creation. This weakness is the strength of God in contrast with the violence of humanity's norms. We need to stand at the foot of the cross and then by the empty tomb and let the whole event and the love displayed therein steal over us - a little more each day, transforming us by the renewing of our hearts and minds.

To help with this I would recommend a little book "At the Cross" by Richard Baukham and Trevor Hart (1999) published by Darton, Longman and Todd in UK and InterVarsity Press in the US. It looks at the cross through the eyes of 11 witnesses including Mary of Bethany, Nicodemus, Simon of Cyrene, Peter, Mary Magdalene. I found it the most moving book on atonement I have ever read, yet it has no grand theory. It just lets the sufferings of Jesus do their work upon us. And that is what God intended, I believe. And since I saw that, which this book powerfully confirmed, the cross has been much more powerful in my life rather than looking for a logical theory.

With love in him who bought us - our whole selves, not just our intellects, with a price. Edgar.

**Linda writes:** Dear Edgar, As you say, Russell is a Christian gentleman. I would see that as a product of what it is that he believes. As with us all, our behaviours will be driven by our beliefs.

*>>I believe there is no one theory of atonement in Scripture, but many angles of view on which we are invited to reflect, grow in grace and in love of God in Christ. We are saved by the Christ who died and rose, not by a theory about him.<<(Edgar)*

The Nazarene Fellowship expresses an angle. I'm not sure why you would say the above, and then try to demolish that angle. It's ironical that you would use such emotive "prosecutor style" language in this process.

However God doesn't apply law the way man applies law. God has written true justice and mercy into His laws. I would even go further than that and say law arose from God's love for us.

When we talk about law, we are not talking about anyone keeping the Law of Moses. And emphatically, we are not talking about legalism.

To know that there is order in the universe and that things are progressing in such a way that ultimately God will be all in all, is a beautiful thing - hardly "legal machinery."

From the way you are writing Edgar, (“great chasm”) I’m thinking you wouldn’t see the language of “court room” and “market place” (another subject) as being a sustained parable throughout the scriptures - more like it’s just right off the planet?  
Love Linda

**Russell writes:** Dear All, Edgar and I go back about 40 or so years to when he began ‘making waves’ in Christadelphian circles. Years later we corresponded briefly and it comes as no surprise to me that he speaks of a “great chasm” between us. Amos 3:3 - “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

It is of course up to readers to decide whether or not I am saying as Edgar declares: -

*“If God had forgiven us freely by his grace this would have meant He did not mean what He said when He passed the sentence and God would be unreliable and His integrity would have been in doubt.” And, “Jesus dying enabled God to remit the sentence without loss of face and placed us on the road to obedience which was expected of us in, but where there was forgiveness, true grace when we failed, if repentant.”*

I would say that such an observation is unworthy of him.

I am reminded of what Schopenhauer said: “Every truth was at first ridiculed, then opposed, then found to be self evident.” Time will tell.

There is only one atonement presented to us in Scripture but we are given many aspects of it, all of which show us the Love, Mercy and Truth of God and how Jesus reflects that Love, Mercy and Truth in His life and in the laying down of His life for us.

I fail to make any sense of Edgar’s statement that *“He (Jesus) stands in weakness - drawing upon himself all the evil of the world and exposing it and providing in his very experience, reflected upon, a platform for a new creation. This weakness is the strength of God in contrast with the violence of humanity’s norms.”*

And he, like Robin, suggests I read a book so that I can understand the atonement better! Prayer is infinitely greater. Knowledge comes from studying the Word of God and understanding and wisdom are gifts from God. Discussion with those with whom we have some common ground is a joy but in contrast, the opinions and observations of others are very limited indeed.

With Love in Jesus. Russell

**Willow writes:** Dear Russell, The problem with atonement theory is that it can appear mechanical. It is perhaps a good thing that Sunday school material is not at fault.

For example, the statement “Jesus died for himself” can be construed in various ways, but I cannot find the expression in BASF Clause 5, so am at a loss to know why you cite clause 5. Similarly, I cannot find comparable words to “God killed his own son” in clause 12, so am at a loss again.

What an action is is very much a matter of how an action is described, and so clause 12 in not using this language cannot be said to be identifying such an action. You would have to make the argument that “killing” was “putting to death” and this latter phrase has legal overtones that the former does not carry.

Accordingly, for the Romans, say, to put Jesus to death within their legal framework does not imply that God put Jesus to death within the Roman legal framework since God is not a Roman judge. Hence, if the Romans killed Jesus, this does not imply God killed Jesus. To use another analogy: to have someone killed is not the same action as killing someone.

So BASF looks immune to this line of criticism, but the “himself” doctrine still remains un-explicated.

Willow

**Russell writes;** Dear Willow, First, an apology. I made a mistake in quoting Clause 5 of the B.A.S.F. when saying that it referred to Jesus dying for Himself. Thank you for pointing this out. I am sorry for this error and while I strongly disagree with the statement in Clause 5 - "A sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being..." - there is nothing here about Jesus dying for Himself.

However it is Clause 8 which I should have referred to where it says that Jesus "by dying, abrogated the law of condemnation for Himself..." This I believe is very wrong because Jesus was never under condemnation. He gave His life voluntarily and not because He had to. "I lay it down of myself" are the plain words of Jesus which tell me He was not condemned and neither did He have to die for Himself.

I believe Clause 12 states plainly that "the Jews and Romans were instruments in the hands of God." In which case God put Jesus to death using the Jews and Romans to kill Him. When David used His army to kill Bathsheba's husband, it was David whom God held responsible. It is impossible for God to disapprove of David's use of 'his instruments' - his army to have Uriah killed (2 Samuel 11) and then use 'His instruments' the Jews and Romans, to have His Son killed. God does not have double standards.

With Love in Jesus who gave His life that we should live. Russell.

**Russell writes:** Dear All, It has been stated time and time again that if a debt is paid then it is not forgiven.

I cannot emphasise strongly enough that this is not true. It is a lie, a lie that denies the Gospel message!

This is strong language and so I will prove my statement to be true with a little common sense.

I, Russell, am in great debt. I owe far more than I will ever be able to pay and my creditors are ready to put me away without any hope of ever seeing freedom again.

I have a wealthy friend and this wealthy friend goes to my creditors and pays off my debt. My creditors are satisfied as they have all they asked for.

But I still owe that debt, not to the creditors but to my generous friend who gave so much for me. I would like to pay my friend for his loving kindness but he says there is no need to pay him as he paid my debt for the joy set before him in seeing my freedom and all he asks of me is that I go and do likewise as much as I am able and show such love to others.

My debt has been paid and I am forgiven. I have been bought with a price. I have been redeemed and given freedom.

Thank God for Jesus! Russell.

**Steve writes:** Russell, If Jesus paid our debt, to whom was it paid?

With love in Jesus, Steve

**Russell writes:** Dear Steve, Thank you for your question - "If Jesus paid our debt, to whom was it paid?"

Jesus didn't pay our debt of life to anyone. He paid His life in the same way as a criminal pays for his crime - with his life. It is not paid to anyone, is it?

With Love in Jesus. Russell

## **After sending out our last Circular Letter I received a letter from a new reader saying she**

**“ never knew what the differences were between us and I don’t think they can really be important. Not one of us has complete understanding, and we will be judged by whether we love rather than what we know.”**

I replied as follows:

Dear Sister

Thank you for your letter and your observations regarding the difference between Christadelphians and the Nazarene Fellowship. While it is true to say that none of us have complete understanding, I do feel there is more to salvation than being judged by whether we love rather than what we know. Both are important but there is the matter of faith and righteousness.

May it not be our lot to be amongst those of whom Jesus says, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” and are rejected.

“Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness” but are we believing God when we believe the Statement of Faith? Even the Editor in the June issue of the Christadelphian Magazine admitted that it contained errors. We believe those errors are serious and very briefly if I may I would like to point out 3 of them:

- 1). Christadelphians teach that the sacrifice of Jesus was for Himself. We deny it. He died solely for us.
- 2). Christadelphians teach that Christ was defiled by sin. We deny it. Jesus was in every sense pure and undefiled.
- 3). Christadelphians teach that Jesus was the Son of God in order to give Him special strength necessary to overcome all temptation to sin. We deny it. Jesus was the Son of God to give Him the legal freedom necessary to be our Redeemer and Saviour.

I quite understand the need to keep one’s message simple and clear when preaching in a foreign language as you do and so have necessarily to avoid the use of jargon such as ‘original sin’ or ‘clean flesh.’ As you say, the important thing is to make sure those to whom you preach understand they have the capacity to sin and Jesus shared that; the difference is that Jesus overcame temptation while we do not.

I agree with these things but what about the Christadelphian literature translated into their native languages which teach more than this? For example I have in mind Ron Abel’s “Wrested Scriptures” which is an excellent work in many respects and I have learnt quite a lot from it to enable me to discuss Scripture with people of other denominations but there are lots of pages which would be better left out because they contain false Christadelphian doctrines.

I long to see the day when these matters are put right.

With Love in Jesus Great Name. Russell.